

YELLOW MEN *and* GOLD

GOUVERNEUR MORRIS



LIBRARY
UNIVERSITY OF
CALIFORNIA
SAN DIEGO



3 1822 01137 8155

PS

3525

07446

Y4

1921

35931E

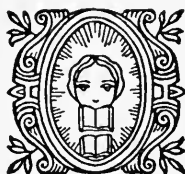
YELLOW MEN AND GOLD

YELLOW MEN AND GOLD

BY

GOUVERNEUR MORRIS

Author of "The Voice in the Rice"



NEW YORK
DODD, MEAD AND COMPANY
1921

COPYRIGHT, 1910, BY
THE RIDGWAY COMPANY

COPYRIGHT, 1911, BY
DODD, MEAD AND COMPANY

To
JOHN O'HARA COSGRAVE

MY DEAR COSGRAVE :

Far be it from me to accuse you of having *written* "Yellow Men and Gold," but if it had not been for you, the yarn might never have got into print. To your long memory and to your taste for adventure must some of the bloodshed in this volume be laid. It was your patience and judgment that gave Frank Norris's "Moran of the Lady Letty" to an admiring world, and now, as the saying is, you must "pay for your fun."

Norris — Morris. Oh, what a falling off is *there*, my countrymen !

Sir, you have been a good friend to me — a wise friend, a generous friend, an engaging friend. I owe you a wing of my house, and there 's a room of this (with bath and sun, and a magnolia tree brushing the window) which I propose to pay back whenever you care to take it for yours.

My gratitude and admiration do not sufficiently show in the quality of this book. Do not look for fruit among the leaves. Believe only that the dedicating heart is sound.

Faithfully yours,

GOUVERNEUR MORRIS.

AIKEN, S. C., Dec. 9, 1910.

CONTENTS

| CHAPTER | PAGE |
|---|------|
| I HOW SUCCESS RUINED ME | 11 |
| II THE MURDER IN THE GULLY | 19 |
| III THE SPOTTED STONE | 26 |
| IV THE CREW-MAN'S WALLET | 34 |
| V THE OWNERS OF THE <i>CALLIOPE</i> . . | 41 |
| VI I "DO" THE TOWN | 52 |
| VII BESSIE | 59 |
| VIII LICHEE | 67 |
| IX BESSIE'S STORY | 73 |
| X TWO SIDES OF A RESCUE | 86 |
| XI MRS. CUNNINGHAM | 94 |
| XII MAGELLAN AT LAST | 108 |
| XIII CHANG GEOLOGISES | 115 |
| XIV JERRY TOP | 122 |
| XV SOME OF US GO TREASURE HUNTING | 128 |
| XVI THE AMBUSH | 133 |
| XVII A REPRISAL | 140 |
| XVIII I RETURN TO THE <i>SHANTUNG</i> . . . | 147 |

CONTENTS

| CHAPTER | | PAGE |
|---------|---------------------------------------|------|
| XIX | AN EXCHANGE | 156 |
| XX | GUIDING THE ENEMY | 167 |
| XXI | A RACE | 175 |
| XXII | A RESCUE | 180 |
| XXIII | THE WHITE FLAG AGAIN | 187 |
| XXIV | TERMS | 195 |
| XXV | CARMEN GIVES ADVICE | 210 |
| XXVI | AT SEA AGAIN | 219 |
| XXVII | DON PHILLIP EMANUEL ESQUADA | 224 |
| XXVIII | WAITING | 233 |
| XXIX | SPIRITS OF LAVENDER | 238 |

YELLOW MEN AND GOLD

CHAPTER
ONE



HOW SUCCESS
RUINED ME

As a schooner among the South Islands, heeling to the honest Trade, skims unaffectedly from port to port, asking but small room of the sea and intent only upon her narrow destiny and little interests; so, I know well, ought a narrative of adventure, treasure-seeking and violent meetings of men, to start, to proceed and to end. Yet from the very veraciousness of those events about to be related, it seems necessary to begin clumsily; as if the vessel to manœuvre were a three-decker, the wind baffling and the channel, between harbor and open sea, tortuous and involved. And there will not be any plain sailing until well after the murder in the gully and the examination of the crew-man's wallet.

I had determined while still in those gawky teens, from which so far as concerns locomotion I shall never emerge, to be an author. And I wrote from that period until my thirtieth year with assiduous patience and distinguished unsuccess. I saw the closest friends of my

youth crawling — but always upward — upon the muddy slopes of banking and brokerage; coming into dazzling legacies, marrying wealthily, and steadily thickening about the waist. But for me those fifteen years had been devilish lean, and hard to bear: hardest to bear were the successes of others who wrote even worse than I; and I have thought (oh, in bitterness if you like, and in envy) that to be a successful author it is necessary only to be heavy, involved, filled to the brim with misinformation, pompous and prudishly afraid of naked words.

I had private means (the meanest kind) until I was twenty-seven; then, luckily, pigs of mine that went to market were bought by the butcher, slaughtered, gutted, debristled, adorned with greens and offered as honest pork to the very hungry. As the difficulties of raising pigs grew, so did the market for them, and the butchers paid generously enough. And I skimmed from the first of one month to the first of the next. But to have laboured with courage and devotion for fifteen years, to have remained in love during that whole period with all of life and with one girl, and at the end of it to be still skimping, must furnish the stoutest stomach with the food of discouragement.

During my thirtieth year, and not many months after a first real success with the public, I allowed hope to die out in my breast for a little interval; and love, which is the same thing. I said good-by to my first memory of her, and to my last; to that mischievous rolling ball of femininity in a blue and white blanket coat, burbling and prattling, that I had toted, closely hugged, in my thin boy arms; to that later picture of her, wonderfully slender, in frosty white, with a great black hat, and innumerable little terriers that dogged her steps across a lawn set with dandelions (as the heavens with stars) and looked up into her face. She had in one hand a pair of pruning-shears, for we had said good-by, and it was in her mind to comfort me with a rose.

As my train crawled and halted and halted and crawled through the snow-sheds into California, the magazine containing my two-page "Tale of a Lady's Hat" was put on sale, and I had not been a month in San Francisco without learning that on the whole the world was the merrier for the trifle, and that, in the telling American, I had "made a hit."

Believing upon this earnest that I could henceforth and forever face a greater em-

barrassment of bills, I went to housekeeping in the little village of San Mateo. There was for house a one-story bungalow that seemed to have been built, walls, roof and chimney, of cloth-of-gold roses and that stood in a seven-eighths acre of almonds and English walnuts planted in alternation. The tiny estate was bounded on the north, or roadside, by scarlet passion vines and sweet-peas, on the east (toward the village) by a hedge of heliotrope eight feet high, on the west by honeysuckle that concealed all but the white-roses roof of Mr. Carrol's house, and on the south by an abrupt, dry and stonily lined gully that had once been the San Mateo River, now dammed many miles above to be a reservoir. To the farther side of the gully came a great screen of bay trees, live-oak, buckeyes and underwood — a boundary of the great Bird ranch, and containing in its immediate midst the hallowed and periwinkled ground where, as the monument solemnly testifies, rested from

1852-1867

The Body of the First Bird

(under which the species had been designated by the pencil of some Iconoclast as the "Dodo"), and where continues to rest, dur-

ing the heat of the day, a vast flock of tame quail.

My cook, housemaid, butler, chambermaid, gardener and occasional adversary at a quiet game of cards was a Chinaman named Fong, who washed himself all over with soap four times a day, owned seventeen tooth-brushes, and smoked opium every afternoon from five-thirty to six-fifteen. He was a practical, saving man, and with my own eyes I have seen quail, of the Bird's tame flock, cross the gully, intent upon a trail of wheat, hop solemnly up the steps into our very kitchen, and emerge no more.

My life, for some months wonderfully happy and hopeful, consisted of hard work from nine till one, leisurely walks back into the hills, and an occasional julep with my neighbour Mr. Carrol. But when I had begun once more to send work to the magazines, sure now, after a little success, of a ready market, life began once more to be complicated. For, far from finding a ready market, I found that such a market as I had had was gone — struck from the map. One and all the manuscripts came back, and one and all the editors wrote to the effect that the stories were very well — capital, indeed — but that having set a cer-

tain standard by the "Tale of a Lady's Hat" I must live up to it. "Readers all over the country," wrote one editor, "are infatuated by that blissful little story, ourselves have laughed over it till we cried, and cried till we laughed. They want more — just like that, and you can give them more — if you only will."

At first such letters made me furious; for I neither could write another tale like that of the "Lady's Hat," nor wished to. But when I realised finally that my wares were become absolutely unsalable, though of better quality, I think, than many which I had managed to sell before, helpless fury yielded by inches to an empty feeling of despair. Here was I, no longer a beginner, but a man of letters, who had at least had his success, and who, instead of being assembled and set up thereby, had been broken and cast aside.

A time came, and with swift strides, when I was unable to pay my bills. And there is, I think, no mental torture so cruel as that — even to the half-way honest. Nor could I think (and I had, I thank God, the courage to try) of any other business upon which I could embark and make a living. I was over six feet high, but without an ounce of strength,

thin as a rail and grotesquely awkward; prodigiously wanting in mathematics and all the other branches of common sense. I had worked, and failed; I had loved, and lost; and still I had the vain wish to hold up my head in the world, while I should remain in it, and to pay my bills. It was evident that I must face my creditors one at a time, and humble myself with explanations and promises, and upon that thought I lay awake for whole nights and writhed. It was also evident that common honesty demanded that I turn such talents as I possessed prostitute, and write tales as nearly like that of the "Lady's Hat" as despair and necessity could manage. Once a sharp stickler for the proprieties, I have never, since those hard days, sat in thoughtless judgment upon women who walk the streets.

Yet I was in worse plight than I knew, for having decided, and taken comfort from the decision, that if my talent must play the light woman it should be cheerfully, I visited an oculist in the city to be refitted with working glasses, and learned, out of an absolutely clear sky in that direction, that if I did not leave books, writing and indoor confinement very strictly alone for a year or more, I might go blind.

I staggered out of that devil's office with hope dead in me, and love; and alive only a kind of wild hatred of God and man, and the most unmanly and childish self-pity and despair. I think I was the most self-centred wreck that ever went from San Francisco to San Mateo (and there must have been many after the great earthquake). I think I could have trampled upon a sick child if one had thwarted me. But I hope not.

I did not at once enter the bungalow, fearing to face the light, or to see myself in a mirror, but shambled aimlessly among the walnut and almond trees, until finally I stood upon the edge of the gully, with half a thought to cast myself head-first upon the stones at the bottom. Had the height been sixty feet and sure death, I would have done so. But it was a scant thirty — tempting but uncertain. And I fancied myself half-dead only, among the stones, a moaning failure in suicide as in life. It is not sure if I moaned aloud or not; but it is sure that something *did* moan at the bottom of the gully; and I started back in a terror the more unreasonable if you consider that I was in the very midst of hobnobbing with self-slaughter.

CHAPTER
TWO



THE MURDER
IN
THE GULLY

THE silhouette of Fong upon the drawn shade of the kitchen window (in the very act of brushing his teeth) was like a reinforcement. I shouted loudly for him; then sat down on the edge of the gully, slung my legs over and slipped and scrambled to the bottom. It was too dark down there for definite perceptions; and as the moaning had ceased, I stood still and at a loss. Nor was it until the light of Fong's lantern shone suddenly into the place that I found my very next step must have been upon the body of a man.

The heart in the body was beating; but when Fong had descended and brought the lantern close, dreadful stabs were disclosed in its stomach and chest, and the stones among which it lay were amuck with blood. I was not experienced in these realities, but I perceived the approach of death as distinctly as that of an embodied person.

"Fong," I said excitedly, "go back home

quick-step and telephone doctor and policeman!"

Fong touched, with a finger like the stem of a much smoked clay pipe, a pocket that had been turned inside out.

"Dam much rob!" he said and, turning, made the precipitous ascent with astonishing alacrity.

Even while attempting to plug with my handkerchief what seemed the deepest and bloodiest stab, I saw that every one of the man's pockets had been turned inside out, and the tail of my eye caught the face of a gold repeater lying between the stones, and, nearer the body, that of Washington from the midst of a greenback. Even in those confused seconds it struck me as odd that these things should have been left behind, if the crime, as the inside-out pockets suggested, had robbery for its motive. I had packed the half of my handkerchief into the wound, with my forefinger, as you pack tobacco into a pipe, when suddenly the man's eyes came open and he said in a wild voice:

"Take it easy, boys — they've cracked!"

And he struggled to raise himself.

It will show the state of mind that I was in to record that I asked him if he was hurt.

But the idiotic query seemed to steady him, and slowly and painfully he brought his eyes to a focus, until they rested on my face.

"Don't know you," he said quietly. . . .
 "Thanks" . . .

I bent close to him and said as clearly as I could:

"Who did it?"

"Oh, hell!" he said; but in the merest whisper. "Cut it out. *They* got me . . . it's up the gully under a spotted stone . . . it's yours, my friend, don't know your name. . . . Don't let *them* get it. . . . Burn all papers in the wallet except it—" With that the reason went clean out of his eyes, and he rose, easily and lightly, to a sitting position, and turning his head as if he saw some one, spoke in the most sarcastic, wearied drawl:

"Harvey," he said, "*you* are n't supposed to be helping yourself to ice-cream . . . you are supposed to be rowing number three in the Yale boat" . . . and then, but in far crisper tones, a note of deep regret in them: "Just as you say, Mr. Cook—" His eyes closed and his head rolled over on his breast, but to be raised once more with a kind of splendid bold alertness.

"Give way!" he cried in a great voice, and

toppling gently over on his side, his soul slipped from him and was soon, perhaps, in old Charon's boat pulling out from the Stygian shore.

While I waited with the dead man, my neighbour, Mr. Carrol, attracted doubtless by that great shout of "Give way," came to the edge of the gully.

"That you, Parrish?" he said.

"Come down," I said. "There's been a murder."

Carrol, a thick-set, fattish great man, descended with difficulty and sharp breathing.

"That's hell, is n't it?" he said.

"For some person or persons — yes," I said.

"Was he dead when you got to him?"

"Not quite," I said. "He lived, perhaps, four minutes after I found him."

"Stuck him in the stomach, did n't they?" said Carrol. "My!"

He knelt by the corpse and felt of the upper arms, thighs and calves.

"Lusty brute, was n't he?"

"He was n't a brute," I said; "he was a gentleman and he rowed in the Yale boat — when Bob Cook was coach. He said as much —"

"Said?" exclaimed Carrol, his eyes round

with astonishment. "Did he say who did it?" He snapped the question at me like a whip. But I interpreted his tone as that natural to a good citizen upon an occasion of crime.

"No," I said.

Carrol passed the back of his hand across his forehead.

"Too bad!" he said mildly.

"Yes," I said, "too damned bad!"

"Did he talk sense?" asked my neighbour suddenly. "Or rave?"

"Why," said I, "some of it sounded like sense, but it was n't about sensible things."

"No dying messages, I suppose? Just what *did* he say?"

"Nothing important, I fancy," said I. "Something about thanking me for trying to help him."

"Dying men," said Carrol, "sometimes say very interesting things — especially those that have lived rough — as this poor cuss has — seems to have," he corrected himself.

And I thought to myself that what the dying crew-man had said about the wallet under the spotted stone was extremely interesting, and much too interesting to be divulged to the first questioner. Indeed the secret, if it was a se-

cret, or anything but raving, had been given to me for my very own, as God could witness, and if it was worth giving it was possibly worth keeping. So much I perceived logically in my unstrung and nervous state of mind.

"At first glance," Carrol broke in upon my reflections, "it looks like ordinary robbery — but see that watch and that greenback. It looks as if something particular had been wanted — does n't it?"

"Just what I think," said I.

"I wonder what?" Carrol mused.

I thought that I could have given Carrol information on the point. I was mistaken. For at that very moment Carrol knew more about the contents of the crew-man's wallet than I did. But what he did know, much as that was, was not sufficient for his purposes. He sighed, and looked for a long time into the dead man's face.

"How unnecessary," he said presently, "how damned unnecessary!"

By some unaccountable freak of *rigor mortis* the crew-man's eyes suddenly opened as if worked by springs, and Carrol jerked himself backward as if he had been struck at.

Talking seemed more comfortable than silence in the presence of the staring eyes, and I

said, trying to pitch my voice in its natural key:

“ Lucky this is n’t the Middle Ages, Carrol. You know they believed that a corpse bled in the presence of its murderer, and opened its eyes, and went through all sorts of dumb-crambo accusations.”

“ I never heard of the eye part,” said Carrol, and he drew a deep breath.

“ Yes,” I said. “ But just before the eyes opened a lot of blood welled suddenly out of one of those cuts. It nearly gave me a fit — I thought for a second it was something alive. It looked like a mouse coming out of its hole.”

“ Don’t say that sort of thing!” said Carrol. “ I’m feeling pretty sick as it is. I want to scream and run away.” A great spasm went through him from head to foot. And he tore his hat from his head and covered the dead man’s face.

CHAPTER III

THE SPOTTED STONE

THE early morning saw me, so recently a candidate for suicide, striking up the dry bed of the San Mateo River from the spot where the murder had been done; my eyes peeled, as the saying is, for spotted stones; and hope once more alive in my breast. Indeed, I had withdrawn so far from absolute despair as to be in a whirlwind of school-boy spirits. My imagination had been wildly at work during the night upon the wallet and its contents.

“Burn all the papers but *It*,” the crew-man had said.

“*It*,” then, if actual money, might be a bill of large denomination; but with that the imagination would not rest. A valuable patent had suggested itself, or a valuable principle to be patented; the location of a rich gold mine, or a coal mine. Something, anyhow, that was worth doing murder for. On the other hand, for a dampener, the reason that suffices one murderer is not sufficient to the next. Some men will kill for a few dirty dollars; some only

for many bright thousands; and some again if merely to put the final quietus upon the tongue of a nagging wife. I tried to hold my desires in check, and kept reiterating, "A couple of thousand will help — just a couple of thousand." But they would not be so snubbed and, together with that ray of hope that had been rekindled in my breast, were ever dancing like mad among the millions.

The ancient river-bed was thickly laid with stones and contained more than one that was spotted. Indeed, had every spotted stone that I turned over concealed a dollar bill, I must soon have lost interest in the crew-man's wallet. I had, I think, pictured the particular stone wanted as greenish black, very thickly and regularly overlaid with white polka-dots, and flattish; yet it might be a white stone, spotted with black; or it might be shaped like a boulder or a pyramid. Whatever its shape, size or appearance, however, I was determined to find it, following the river-bed, if necessary, all the stumbly miles to the reservoir and back. But it was aching, hard work, and I was very sharp with Providence for having supplied me with so weak and awkward a frame and with so cowardly a pair of lungs. The more so that there was nothing wrong with them but a

chronic aversion to doing their work cheerfully in the world. I could not dog-trot it for a city block without their losing all ambition and flying into a passion of protest. Indeed, coming suddenly upon a hundredweight stone, yellowish and darkly spotted like the hide of a leopard, I was obliged to put off the moment of turning it; and, instead, sat upon it, for it looked a soft comfortable stone, and rested.

The banks of the gully were at this point of a negligible height and clothed with a dense but not tall vegetation of scrubby buckeyes, nightshade and riotous wild-grape vines; and a little above where I sat, and a little below, the gully itself turned off sharply; so that I occupied, as it were, the centre of a stony open space in the midst of a forest.

Now this same weakness of limb and lung which so handicapped my quest was to prove instrumental in its safe accomplishment; for had I turned over the stone upon which I sat when I wished to, instead of waiting till I could, I must have been discovered in the very act by my neighbour, Mr. Carrol, who came now suddenly into view around the upper bend, at a very slow pace, his small bright eyes ranging penetratingly among the stones.

“Hallo!” said I, when he had drawn near. He started violently, as indeed the most innocent person might have done under the circumstances, and made the familiar gesture of passing his hand across his forehead without actually touching it. But he pulled himself together almost at once, and seating himself near me, “Hot, isn’t it?” he said, and flung off his hat and ran his fingers through his hair.

“Scientific people,” said he, “believe that somewhere on this peninsula there is a vein of coal. I sometimes take a day off and go botanising after it.”

“It’s like me,” said I; “I have been geologising for wild flowers. And I’m quite blown, thank you.”

“By the way,” he said, “I’m expecting some odd characters to lunch; would you care to look them over, with your constant view to fiction?”

“I’d like to look in *after* lunch,” I said. “What are they — anarchists like last time?”

Carrol grinned.

“I do have the damnedest friends, don’t I?” said he. “No, these are three young bums, and one of them — Lynch — has got hold of a schooner, for a bad debt; the other two have

chipped in a little money, and they 've made up their minds to cruise the Gulf of California for ambergris and pearls." He shot a quick glance at me. "Fancy," he said, "they've got a diving-suit!"

"Have they?" said I innocently. He had taken a shot at me, I learned later, but had missed the mark, easy though it was.

"The funniest part," he went on, "is this. I'm going with them."

"You don't mean it!" I exclaimed, for I had regarded Carrol as a sensible matter-of-fact man, above any childish impulse.

"Why," said he, with a frankness that was attractive in him, "I'm so dead broke I can't see straight, and I'm so fat I can't walk straight, and I'm so down on my luck that I can't think straight."

"I have always pictured you," said I, "on the very verge itself of prosperity."

"I am," he said, "always all that and never anything more. Of course I don't believe in the pearl and ambergris part of the trip, any more than I believe that a beautiful woman," he smiled ruefully, "could learn to love me for my shape alone; but I do believe that sea food and sea air and especially sea work would make a new man of me — a slim godlike man."

“Like me,” said I, “with chuckle knees and a backache and a pair of bellows that can just put a candle out at the fifth blow.”

“Besides,” said Carrol, “I owe a lot of dirty little bills, and they fidget me. You’ll look in after lunch, then?”

I nodded, and he rose.

“Are you going any farther?” he asked.

“I think yes,” said I. “Why?”

“Why,” said he, “I seem to have lost my wallet. It’s too much bother, and I have n’t time to go back and look for it, on the chance. Still I want it, for old sake’s sake.”

“What sort of a wallet is it?” I asked.

“My *dear* man,” said Carrol, “you speak as if you expected to find fifty wallets. But mine is to be recognised by the fact that it contains absolutely no money—and a few letters that you may read if you wish, but which will make you think the worse of me. They are from a beautiful woman,” he explained, “who loves me when I have money.”

Then with a cheerful “So long!” he waved a pudgy hand and was soon out of sight around the lower bend.

I was now rested, and rose to the work of turning over the stone upon which I had been sitting. By good fortune, for my strength

was not up to the task, it was not deeply bedded and had a convenient ledge for the hands to grip; and at the very first tug it came half over — and I let go, with a startled gasp, and it dropped back into place.

The finding of a snake so close to my hand would have produced an effect upon me very similar to that caused by an actual sight of that which I sought. And for some moments I could not make the further effort necessary to gain possession of the crew-man's wallet, but stood aloof from the stone, wholly out of breath, and with a wildly beating heart.

Then once more I bent to it, and this time turned it over — and saw the wallet, released from pressure, expand like a live thing that draws a deep breath.

I noted only that it was of pigskin, darkly stained by age and sweat; and then, you will guess, I lost no time in going through its contents!

But you have guessed wrong; for with the issue in my very hands, I had not at that moment the heart to face it. My highest hopes seemed to crowd about and implore me to wait. Thus when at Christmas-time a boy receives an envelope directed in the writing of his rich uncle, he does not at once open it, but exults

awhile with the hope that the check it contains will be double that of the year before, so, instead of going through with the business then and there, I slipped the wallet into my inside pocket and buttoned my jacket over that which, in moments of supreme excitement, I am pleased to call my chest.

CHAPTER IV

THE CREW-MAN'S WALLET

I TOOK out the wallet in my bedroom, having bolted the door, and shook the contents of its various pockets upon the bed. The inventory follows:

1. A part of an envelope, unaddressed and scrawled over with telephone numbers;
2. A whole envelope, blank, but not very clean;
3. An elastic band;
4. A much soiled square of chewing-gum, make and flavour unknown;
5. A fish-hook, with the point broken off;
6. A copy of amatory Spanish verses in a swift female hand;
7. A French two-franc piece;
8. A slip of paper, with a design in pencil, neatly executed for an elaborate, but undecipherable, monogram;
9. An old joke cut out of a newspaper, and
- 10, and last, the half of a dinie, cut clean off as by a pair of shears.

You will imagine that I made sure to have overlooked nothing before I flung the wallet

disgustedly on the floor and gave way to a fit of contemptuous laughter. I had, indeed, builded my hopes very high, and to have their fanciful structure fall so grotesquely flat was nothing less than sickening. Yet, unwilling to accept defeat, I once more went through the wallet, turning its pockets literally inside out and poking my long fingers into the crevices and along the seams. So violent and angry was the search that I tore the rotten leather in places, and it was from between the edges of such a tear that I perceived suddenly a portion of paper surface criss-crossed with the minutest of writing in the blackest of ink. Nor could I doubt that I had uncovered, by an eleventh-hour accident, that mysterious "It" which had cost the crew-man his life.

The paper, on being extricated, proved a rectangular slip of a thin and shiny manufacture, six inches long by five inches wide. It had been folded lengthwise once; the double leather between two of the compartments of the wallet had been ripped along the seam to receive it and resewed with perfect fidelity to the original thread and to the needle-holes. As for the writing, with which both sides of the paper were closely crossed, it was miraculously even, and so fine as to re-

36 YELLOW MEN AND GOLD

quire for decipherment a reading-glass; and one far stronger than I possessed would have made the task far easier.

One whole side of the sheet, and all but a few lines of the other, was covered by an inventory list of articles of value; with the following note at the beginning:

Translation of original inventory, now in the Royal Library, Madrid, of articles of gold, silver, etc., consigned by Pizarro, from Peru, in the galleon *Espiritu Santo*, to the King of Spain.

The inventory as a whole read like some wild fiction, but I have not here the space to set it all down. Here are a few items, chosen at random:

3. Small box of emeralds, carved in imitation of roses;

7. A palace wainscoting of gold, laid upon wood;

8. A mortar and pestle of gold;

18. A little tree of gold hung with jewelled fruits;

23. A gold door, cunningly carved with bestial scenes;

29. Two Peruvian princesses, fifteen years of age;

30. Six great chests, containing their raiment and jewels;

33. An Inca's head in a cask of spirits;

37. Eight thousand pound of gold, cast into ingots;

38. Eight thousand pounds of silver, cast into ingots ;

50. One great chest, containing divers golden vessels, ewers and services.

And at the very end of the long inventory was the following priceless information :

The *Espiritu Santo* was lost in shoal water off a volcanic rock or islet that lies in latitude——longitude——. Fragments of the vessel may be discerned by the use of a marine-glass, in the midst of the cove at the North-west corner of the islet, and much of the treasure might be recovered by the use of a diving-suit and a little patience. Written this —— day of —— —— in the prison of Sing Sing for my only friend in this world, Roy Cunningham. If my memory has played tricks with me, Roy, it is only to the extent of an item or two in the inventory. The latitude and longitude is O. K. Pray for my horned soul, and God bless you ! This time to-morrow I shall be — where ? And you, perhaps, on your way to the Straits of Magellan.¹

I think a man's imagination must be a spiritless nag not to be set galloping by such a spur. Mine, I know, went a-flying to the

¹ The treasure route from Peru to Spain was by way of Panama in Pizarro's day. But the case of the *Espiritu Santo* goes to show that there must have been some knowledge of Magellan's Strait, prior to Magellan's discovery. — J. P.

closing scenes of the great Inca's life (and very white they looked against their black and amber background of Spanish lies and treachery). I saw as in a stage drop the bearded Spanish men staggering up the galleon's gangways under the chests of ingots and gems; the cask with the Inca's head, lightly handled, like a sample of the new country's pickles for the Sovereign. The golden door with its bestial carvings; that exquisite little tree of gold with its jewelled fruits; and those jewelled fruits the little brown princesses, ripe for the plucking, with their round eyes full of wonder; and I sailed with the labouring galleon in the heel of the trades, with the unknown seas upon the one hand and the unknown mountains upon the other; and sailed from under the bright skies into a moaning, gray, dripping region; and saw the waves broken and subdued among the monstrous seaweeds of Magellan; and the ravines filled with dark and sombre forests; and for a moment, cleared of mist and fog, the eternal snows low upon the mountains; and saw the gull and the albatross loafing into the storm blast; and heard the thunder of breakers; and felt in my very soul that earthquake sickening shock when the galleon struck; and felt her sink beneath my feet,

and go down, with her colossal treasure, and the princesses, locked, perhaps, in each other's arms, poor kids, and with the whole of her hell-bound crew.

No, not the whole of it; for there must have been one at the least to escape with the bearings of where the tall galleon lay. And I followed him more vaguely, and pictured him suddenly struck dead for his secret, as the crew-man had been struck in the gully. And I came swiftly down the hundreds of years with the secret, and the intrigues for it, and the bloody murders and the wild passions that it must have loosed — came down, indeed, to the reality of the little bedroom in which I was pacing like a wild animal; and there my imagination stuck fast. For I could no more think out a logical way to lift the treasure from that far-away floor of the sea than I could fly. Who could capitalise the weak-bodied, spiritless author or trust him to raise from the deep that treasure which had defied the men of action these many hundred years?

I soon saw that I was in no condition at that time to focus upon rational issues; so I slipped the crew-man's legacy beneath the carpet; burned as directed such papers as the wallet contained, and the wallet itself; bathed my

flushed face again and again with cold water; had a snack of lunch (it was now half-past two o'clock) and started over to Mr. Carrol's house, to hear the talk and make the acquaintance of his adventurous friends.

CHAPTER V

THE OWNERS OF THE *CALLIOPE*

As I turned the corner of his house I met Carrol stepping off the bowery porch, his arms filled with bottles of beer, and his face flushed.

“Parrish,” said he, “we’re out under the big buckeye celebrating. Take some of these, there’s a dear man! . . . Since I saw you —” I relieved him of a portion of the bottles, and we proceeded toward the great buckeye from the other side of which came the sound of gleeful chuckles. “Since I saw you,” Carrol repeated, “I have sold the old homestead; a man and his wife, lungers, I fancy, dropped in out of the golden East — Noo Yok — they said, I fancy it is in Persia — and took one good look at Fat Carrol’s house and lot and bought them out of hand. Hence the celebration. It’s the smooth moneys that are to be paid over in the morning that have made Fat Carrol so happy and free from care. Gentlemen —” as we rounded the sweeping branches of the buckeye and came upon a group com-

posed of three live civilians and some twenty or thirty dead soldiers, as the saying is — “let me present Mr. Parrish — not Max, the pictator — but James, the merry-companion author of the ‘Tale of a Lady’s Hat.’ Mr. Parrish, Mr. Joseph Lynch, commonly known as ‘Nine Points of the Law’ — or ‘Ten Pins’ for short. Mr. Paul Granger Craven, the well-known amateur pugilist, and Mr. Willing Todd, the pet of the natatorium and the Columbus of the Poodle Dog and the Barbary Coast.”

The gentlemen were all in the thirties, I guessed, with the exception of Carrol, who had the look of a youthful fifty; and I have never sat down to beer with a more cheerful and debonair quartet. They were vulgarians, if you like, the type that shaves the back of the neck and selects in conversation, when there are many names for a spade, that which is the least agreeable to the ear, though often the most connotative to the mind. They had a kind of clannish humour, as if they had spent much of their lives in various unities of interest; and I could not but admire, and indeed envy, the elation of spirits into which the approaching project of their adventure threw them. Yet I detected, too, beneath their habit

of turning the issue, whatever its nature, into a joke, a kind of underlying vein of stubborn determination, a kind of ready-at-need quality that led me to think them the very types of man best suited to a catch-as-catch-can enterprise. And I thought them honest as men go, with a distinct preference for giving the odds and seeing fair play. And this in spite of the fact that for the more exquisite relations in nature they had no more regard or respect than so many dogs. They had planned, for instance, casually and as a matter of course, to take a couple of women upon the cruise; and, listening to the argument upon which the plan was abandoned, I heard many shrewd phrases of expediency, but not so much as one word against the morals of the thing.

"We'll just have to grin and bear the times when they would n't have been in the way," exclaimed Mr. Willing Todd, and he tilted the tag-ends of a beer bottle into his mouth.

"And when we get back," Craven mollified himself for the disappointment which the decision had cost him, "with pearls and ambergris and shark-fins, you'll hear the breakers roar along the Barbary Coast!"

They made so light of the serious sides of

the adventure, and so sure of its nebulous sides, that from the first I saw myself sailing with them in spirit; and, in spite of that allocative document hidden beneath the carpet in my bedroom, the approximateness of *their* quest — the schooner provisioned in the harbour, and manned; Carrol's bills about to be paid; indeed, the fact of the thing made me lose sight for the time being of the more alluring, if remote, aspects of my own undigested adventure. Indeed, I was thrown into such an envy and restlessness by their tale that twice I was on the point of saying, "Come, gentlemen, make me a partner with you, and we shall sail — not for the Gulf of California — but for the Straits of Magellan, and I shall tell you why!"

And I fancied excusing myself, and reappearing with the memorandum of treasure, and flinging it like a bomb-shell into their midst. It must be that my face had upon it an envious and excited expression; for Carrol, who, I noticed, attended with the most flattering attention whenever I spoke, suddenly clapped his hand heartily upon my knee. And, "Parrish," said he, "chuck your troubles and come along!"

His voice had in it a kind and friendly ring.

"Oh, I could n't," I said quickly and a little nervously. "I could n't very well run away, owing money right and left."

"Now look here," he said, "we need another man."

"But not me," said I. "I can't contribute anything; and I'm abjectly useless."

"If I said, then," said Carrol, "that during our little talks across the fence and our little visits and all, I had grown fond of you, Parrish, you would n't believe me?"

I cannot deny that I was flattered and moved.

"Look here," he said, "take a bit of a walk."

We rose, and he thrust his arm through mine and led me away. The others, it seemed to me, had exchanged glances; but I laid it to their wish to express that Carrol had drunk too much beer.

"Now, Jim," said Carrol, "let me say first that your face is an open book and that I can read what's passing in your mind — when it is n't above my level. If you can deny that you're in deep trouble and at your wit's end, you're a damned liar —" He pressed my arm affectionately.

"Well, then I am," I blurted out. "I can't sell my stuff, I owe money, and the doctor says I must live in the open air away from books or take my chances of going blind."

We walked a little farther without saying a word; yet Carrol kept talking to me by that firm pressure on the arm.

"Well," he said, after a while, "what's the matter with the cruise of the *Calliope* for open air?"

"Even if I could pay my bills and go," said I, "I'd be a burden."

"Not you, Jim," said Carrol. And after another pause, "What do you owe?" he asked. And I told him. He swore profanely.

"Good God!" he said, "you've *looked* the liabilities of a Trust Co., while you've only incurred those of an apple woman. My dear dear boy, say you'll come, and out of the money I'm to be paid to-morrow I'll fix you up."

"You will?" I said.

"Sure," said he.

"Carrol," I said, greatly moved, "it's wonderful to find such kindness among strangers, in a far place. But the kindness sha'n't be all on one side. Your cruise is the chanciest kind of a thing — is n't it? What if I can lay a better course for you all; what if I can tell

you where a Spanish treasure ship lies in shoal water — ”

I ought then and there to have realised my folly, for Carrol drew such a breath as a man draws on reaching the surface of the water after being half buried in the depths. But he had himself so quickly in hand again that I suspected nothing.

“ You have n’t drunk too much, have you? ” he said humorously.

“ You remember,” I said, “ you asked me what the murdered man said before he died? Well, I did n’t tell you. Can you guess why he was murdered? ”

“ Who — I? ” Carrol seemed startled, and I laughed.

“ He was murdered for the secret of the treasure ship; but he had hidden it. And I found it.”

“ Now calm down,” said Carrol, “ and switch to simple language.”

“ Come into my house,” I said, “ and we ’ll let the facts do the talking.”

While Carrol was going over the crew-man’s legacy through my reading-glass, he got redder and redder in the face. He looked giddy, and again and again passed a hand across his forehead. Yet his only comment from start to

finish was a kind of shocked reiteration of the phrase "Just x-cuse me — Just x-cuse me!"

But, having finished, he rose, and banged his fist upon the table.

"My God!" he said, "my God!"

"Do you think," I ventured, "that maybe there's nothing in it?"

"Think, Lucky Penny, old boy — think — no — I don't — I can't! But I'll tell you one thing. Whoever did one murder for that, would do another quick as winking!"

"Good God!" I said, "I had n't thought of that! But no one knows I have it but you, Carrol."

"How do you know — nobody knows? Don't you suppose *they* know you were the first man to be on the scene? The papers had it — don't you suppose you've been watched and marked ever since? My God, Jim, you've got a nerve!"

He picked up a savage-looking kris that I used for opening letters, and fell to testing the point with his thumb; but his thought seemed far from the business.

"There's nothing to prevent one of them walking into this bungalow to-night and sticking that into you, my boy!" And he flung the ugly thing sharply back among the litter on

the table. I noticed that he was very white; and I thought the pallor flattering, as showing the sharpness with which my possible danger affected him.

“Now,” said he, “you put together what things you can carry in a couple of suitcases, and you go straight up to Frisco, take Fong to help you, and you go to the Palace, and you keep in the palm-room where there is always a crowd; until I *come!* Don’t have anything to do with any one you don’t know.”

“And how about my affairs in this town?” I said.

“Get your bills together,” said he, “and leave them with me.”

Being orderly by habit, I had them ready in a neat packet, which Carrol thrust, with a nod, into his pocket.

“But do you really think I’m in danger?” I asked.

“Jim,” he said earnestly, “you *bet!* When a man’s got the wealth of Ormus and of Ind in his clothes he’s in danger, and you may take pen and ink and write it down.”

I glanced involuntarily into the corners and out of the windows of the peaceful and familiar room.

“Was that poor cuss in the gully ever in

danger, Jim?" said Carrol. "I ask you. Now do as I say!"

"Indeed I will," said I, with a kind of coward eagerness. "But I'm glad you're in the know, Carrol, because I'm an innocent, and it never would have entered my head that any one but the butcher or the baker had it in for me."

"Jim," said Carrol, "we'll come for you about seven-thirty, in the palm-room, mind; and we'll make a body-guard until we get you safe aboard the *Calliope*." He turned to go, but returned upon a thought.

"Look," said he, "Will I tell the boys now, or later when we're all aboard? It's for you to say."

"Oh," said I, "later, when we're under way — don't you think — and surprise them, good!"

"You bet," said Carrol, and he smiled broadly. "But what a child you are."

Again he turned to go, and once more came back.

"We've got to keep pretty well together," he said, "but I'm afraid the boys are for making a night of it — liquor and ladies, and all that — you see it's their last night ashore, and you see —"

“I don’t judge for others,” I said. “But that’s reason enough for not telling them — till later.”

“Right,” said Carrol, “and you and I’ll eschew the bottle and keep the bunch in hand *if* we can.”

He left me, and I went at my work of selection and packing with an ardour not diminished by the thought that those who had not stopped at one murder would not balk at another. But it heartened me some to hear, now and again, through the open window the bursts of laughter from the jolly companions under the buckeye tree. Indeed, one burst of it, not long after Carrol must have rejoined them, was so heartfelt and contagious that in the midst of folding a blue flannel shirt I burst out laughing myself.

But if I had known what the joke was, at which I laughed with so much enjoyment, the hour of seven-thirty would not have seen me impatiently waiting in the palm-room of the Palace Hotel for the appearance of Carrol and the joint-owners of the *Calliope*.

CHAPTER
SIX



I "DO"
THE TOWN

ALL cities are cities of dreadful night. Yet if palms were awarded for being dreadful, I think the first would be flung at the feet of San Francisco. I had often delighted to deal firmly in fiction with what I fancied to be the darker sides of life. And I had hung a little upon the outskirts of vice, dined in its least notorious restaurants or drunk my cocktail across its outer bars. But of wickedness, of which I had thought myself not the least piercing observer, I knew until the later hours of that night, nothing. And, oh, the faces and the jargon and the dark places and the thirsts and the lechery that I saw that night as in a hideous revelation — a crowd of half living, half putrid maggots feeding like mad things upon the very guts of the city! Vice I saw without the gilding; and learned the abyss between what is not respectable and what is lost.

Nor was I happy in thinking that my companions for the voyage should have thought

that the scenes through which they passed me would — oh, not please me, perhaps, but appeal strongly to my sense of the picturesque.

"Let's have a look at Sky's," one would say. "Parrish ought to see that." Or "Let's show him the Sink," or the like. To my shame be it said that I had not the *face* to say that I was displeased and unhappy. And, sick at heart, I suffered myself to be led from one abomination to the next. You will hear it said that such an experience has its value. But I think not. I should like to see at once very much less reticence in the world — and very much more.

As we "did" the town — ripe for damnation — my three younger showmen became gradually drunk. And I myself, to keep up heart, had taken more than I was accustomed to or could well "carry," as the saying is. Indeed, I recollect being pulled away from a haggish young woman whom I had suddenly accosted at the corner of a street and was exhorting to lead a better life. And I was very sharp with Carrol for interfering with my efforts to do a little good in the world, and would have broken from him and gone back to renew the sermon had I not heard the woman calling

upon Carrol to "hide that —— —— long-legged spider or she 'd cut its heart out."

"Come along, Jim," said Carrol, "you're drunk."

"I'm not," said I, "not in the least. I was never more rational in my life. You can start any argument you like and see if I'm not, to prove it."

"I don't give a whoop if you are or not," said Carrol.

I tried to answer him, but gave it up owing to a sudden and wearisome thickening among my vocal cords. And I fell to counting just how many drinks I had had, and then was startled to think that so very few should have had so grave an effect upon me; for, in addition to the thickening sensation among the vocal cords, my feet had become terribly heavy, and my limbs as if made of fluids. "Surely," I thought, "six or more drinks of whiskey could n't do it!" And I wanted to ask Carrol's opinion, and could not. I came to a dead halt, with Lynch laughing and holding me by one arm, and Carrol, with a kind of expectant expression, holding me by the other. Craven and Todd faced me, flushed and wild-eyed.

"Well," said Carrol gently, "let's put him aboard."

I tried to say that I thought the last drink must have been drugged, was conscious of a frightful wild beating of my heart, as of a caged bird struggling to escape; I felt a hand slide into the breast of my jacket, and knew no more.

I must have been senseless as a bale of goods for a long time; and must have slept naturally for many hours after the effects of the soporific drug had passed off; for I woke, rather than came to, feeling less wretched than may be supposed, and clear in mind. Yet not so clear as I thought; for I imagined myself to be lying in the open air upon a sidewalk; and for a long time neither the complete darkness nor the occasional strong lifting under me and falling away of the pavement seemed unaccountable. Nor did I realise for a long time that the hot, close air could not by any magic be related to the inspiring draft of a San Francisco street at night.

But at last it became evident to a jaded and illogical understanding that I was shut up somewhere, in an unventilated place that rose and fell quietly, as the breast rises and falls in deep breathing; and upon that realisation came rapidly other evidences — smells of

bilge-water, of caulking and marine stores — that I was upon a ship at sea.

The adventure, then, had begun. The *Calliope* was southing; I had been put aboard in a senseless, drunken condition, and now Carrol and the others would be laughing at me to my face. I had wakened with the suspicion that Carrol himself had done the drugging, and that it was his hand that had slipped inside my jacket and relieved me of the crew-man's legacy. But I thought now that the drugging must be attributed to my own weak head, and the picking of my pocket to Carrol's natural wish to see the document in more responsible keeping. Yet my friends, too drunk themselves, perhaps, had not stowed me comfortably; or if they had laid me in a bunk, I had tumbled out of it. While I lay thus, desultorily ruminating, there opened suddenly, half a dozen feet above my head, a hatchway, and I saw bent over the brightly illumined square a yellow Chinaman, naked to the waist. I lay blinking at him.

For two seconds, perhaps, the Chinaman did not move a muscle. Then suddenly he whipped out a bright long knife from somewhere, caught it horizontally between his teeth and, before I could move hand or foot in self-

defence, had dropped through the hatch and was kneeling heavily upon me. Yet murderously as he had come to me, he did not offer to strike. He seemed, indeed, relieved to find so unresisting an object to his prowess, and presently, lifting his face skyward, commenced to shout in a kind of shrill, high sing-songing. Other yellow faces appeared soon in the hatchway, and the light was practically shut off by the massing.

There was a great interchange of swift jabbery; and then the Chinaman that knelt upon me rose and motioned me to rise also. Seeing me to be scarce able to stand alone, yellow hands reached downward and helped me through the hatch. And I found myself in a kind of ship's fore-castle, the centre of a group of a dozen Chinamen, half naked and barefoot. I say a *kind* of fore-castle, for though the place occupied the usual wedge-shaped space in the vessel's bows, and was lined with tiers of bunks, it had about it a garish and Oriental look; for the curtains to the bunks were of showy, if coarse, embroidery; a big, brass, squatting god glowed between the butts in the bow, and the deck-beams and planking were one struggling mass of dragons; an inimitable composition, in Chinese-blue, scarlet and orange.

Also there was an effect about the place of fluttering papers; and I learned afterward that these were prayers, mutilated wherever piety could find a place for them. And for the rest, that fore-castle smelt as no white man's fore-castle smells; here was no odour of mildew and sour sweat, but a clean pungent odour, a hint of incense, or joss-sticks, perhaps, a hint of camphor and pepper.

From the fore-castle I was helped to the ship's deck; and there, what with the brightness of the sun, the overpowering freshness of the sea air and the emptiness of my stomach, for all the world like a young lady whose stays are drawn too tight, I fainted dead away.

CHAPTER
SEVEN



BESSIE

I CAME to, lying upon a doubled quilt, in the shadow cast by the mainsail and faced so that I could see far off the purple hills of California sliding astern. The same Chinaman that had drawn the knife was sitting on his heels beside the quilt and offering me, in a blue and white bowl, a fluid mixture of water and soft boiled rice. How good it tasted! Or rather felt, for my insides burned like the pipes in a boiler. Nor could I take my lips from the bowl to ask where Carrol was until I had gulped the half of its contents.

“Callol,” said the Chinaman, with an amused and tolerant smile, “no sabe Callol — Bessie come soon — him very fine talkee womans.”

“Bessie?” I said idiotically. “What Bessie?”

“Him come now,” said the Chinaman. He scrambled to his feet, and with a sudden nodding smile and open-hand gesture, indicated me to some one and, turning, went softly forward.

“Well of all the skinnies!” said a woman’s voice, and I tried to rise. But was pushed down again by the shoulder.

“Take it easy,” she said, and came around where I could see her and seated herself in a matter-of-fact way on the quilts at my feet.

She was no beauty (though young) and inclined to be overweight. But there was a certain comeliness about her, of colouring and of fine black eyes that twinkled amazingly. Her hair hung in two very thick but not very long braids, and was coarse but of a lovely brown colour, with lighter streaks due to sun-burn, and very shiny; her face was broadish, the features inclined to be thick; but she had an expression of well-being and joviality that were mighty pleasant to the eye. For costume she had a blue serge skirt spotted by sea-water, a kind of dressing-jacket of Chinese cut and material; and little else I fancy; certainly neither shoes nor stockings.

“I’m Bessie,” she said, “that’s all. Who are you?”

“My name is Parrish,” I said, “and I’m part owner of the *Calliope*.”

“What’s that?” said Bessie.

“Why,” said I, “is n’t this the *Calliope*?”

“This?” she exclaimed. “This schooner?”

Not on your life. This jolly boat is the *Shantung*. And your hall-marks say 'stowaway' plain as day. And the Shantung Company would like to know how you came to be in the forward storeroom?"

"As to that," I said, though very much bewildered, "I was put. Are there no white men on this ship?"

"Not a one but you," said she.

"Then," said I, "I was drugged and robbed and shunted off where I could do no harm and tell no tales." Indignation rose and I found the strength to sit up; and I plunged into my bad-luck story at a speed that produced upon Bessie a look of complete bewilderment.

She interrupted good-naturedly.

"I'll tell you," she said, "just where you are. And you can dope out how you got here. The *Shantung* belongs to those who work her — just thirteen of 'em, and she sailed yesterday morning in hardware for Peru to trade in miscellanies. Now what's that to you?"

"Yesterday morning!" I cried. "Have I been in that hole all that time? No wonder I'm done up."

"It's wonderful it didn't kill you," said she.

"As," said I, "it was probably meant to,"

And again I began my story, but with more clarity and less speed. And, though intending to reserve the parts that concerned the lost galleon, I had soon told Bessie the whole of it.

“But,” she said, when I had done, “if there was all that treasure, and you told them where it was, why would n’t they take you along and let you share?”

“That’s what I don’t get,” said I. “There seems to be millions of treasure, and there were only five of us; and it was I that found out where the stuff was.”

“Well,” said Bessie, “some men are so mean you can’t understand it at all.”

“I would n’t wonder,” I said, “if it was n’t so much meanness as just plain thinking I’d all the time be in the way. And I dare say that’s right. You see I’m not up to much hard work, and I’m not very practical.”

“And I don’t see why they put you on board the *Shantung*. It was a dead easy thing to do, because we all were ashore at a wedding in Chinatown, and perhaps that’s the reason. It would have been a cinch to knock you on the head and stuff you into a manhole, or to just drop you overboard and whack you once with an oar.”

"They were all pretty drunk," I said; "at least I think so, and maybe they didn't quite know what to do with me; and maybe they thought they were perpetrating a joke." I smiled dismally, but Bessie shook her head.

"They hoped you'd smother yourself in the storeroom," she said. "Don't see why you didn't; and they thought maybe your death would be fixed on us. And that's *one* for your fat Carrol. But say, what about this treasure? That all sounds like gibberish."

I had to go pretty deeply into early Spanish explorations and the conquest of Peru before she understood; and then she said:

"Well, if your address was *bona fide*, you've played in dirty hard luck to lose it. But I don't see what you can do about it."

"Oh," said I, "the paper itself doesn't matter, Miss Bessie."

"Guess you'd better say *Mrs.* Bessie," said she.

"Beg pardon," I said, "I will. I've got the paper pretty well by heart. Indeed, I don't do anything well except remember things."

"You remember the bearings?" she asked, and I repeated them for her.

"About where is that on the map?" she said.

"Why," said I, "I did n't look at it, but it 's not far from the Straits of Magellan; maybe in the Straits themselves, but south of them, I think; off Terra del Fuego, I think."

"Do you believe in it?" she asked. "In the treasure, I mean?"

"Mrs. Bessie," I said, "the crew-man believed in it; his murderers believed in it; Carroll and his gang believed in it; and, as I feel like a played out dish-rag, there 's not much to prevent *me* believing in it."

She thought a while.

"Nor me," she said finally, and looked landward for some moments, frowning thoughtfully and pursing her lips. Presently her brow smoothed and she turned once more to me.

"If you," said she, "were willing to go shares, share and share alike, I might get the company to take the matter up. If we make a good dicker in Peru, and are feeling pretty flush, it might just appeal to the company to take a chance, and again it might not."

"You mean the Shantung Co.?" I asked. "This ship, in other words?"

"Yes," she said, "and the kid, and me."

"Do you belong to the company?" I asked.

"Why, yes, I do," she said.

“And the kid?” I asked.

“That’s Lichee,” said she, and she smiled at the thought of him. “He’s not awake yet, the lazy little beggar. But when he *is* awake Mr. — *Parrish*, did n’t you say? — he’ll be good company for you.” She leaned toward me confidentially. “He’s a child, too!” And then for the first time I heard her laugh. It was not the ha-ha-ha of civilisation, but the great haw-haw-haw chest tones of the African savage — a laugh at once strong music and the epitome of humour. The tears of laughter rolled from her eyes; and I caught a glimpse of more than one Chinaman looking suddenly up from his work and smiling broadly toward the burst of merriment.

After a while she stopped laughing and rose to her feet.

“Now for business,” she said. “Do I lay the matter before the company — or don’t I? It’s your secret.”

“No,” said I, “it became yours, too, when you laughed like that.”

“Good!” she said, and flushed up redly under her clear tan. “But you won’t find them coming to any decision right off. There’s no man in this world so quick to decide as a Chinaman if he’s only got a second to make up his

mind; and there 's no man so slow, if he 's got weeks and weeks. Anyhow," she went on, "you 'll be parlour-boarder; and I 'm hanged if we don't put a little flesh on your bones. There is n't a better trainer in God's world than I am. I had a husband," she said, with a sudden twitching of the eyelids, "who was a crank on health — Sleep," she said, "is the most important thing; so roll over, and when you wake up I 'll see that you do the next most important thing next."

And I rolled over as I had been commanded, and fell upon the instant into a quiet deep-sea sleep.

CHAPTER
EIGHT



LICHEE

My eyes were no sooner wide open than Bessie came up to me, smiling as upon a child, and, "Now, sir," she said, "stand up!"

So I stood up, very weakly, and said that I was waiting for orders.

"Well," she said, "draw a deep breath — try to burst yourself — that's the way — and now hold it, as long as you can — there, that'll do; and now let it out, as slow as you can. It's to give you the right kind of an appetite and everything," she said.

"It makes me dizzy," I said.

"Never mind that," said she; "do you see how it's done?"

"Yes," I said.

"Then," said she. "I'm going below; and you'll go on breathing as I've showed you till you get your clothes off, and then you'll go and stand in the lea-scuppers, and the boys will look

after you. Now," she said, "don't look obstinate. It's for your own good — pah — no wonder you're sickly!" She turned away impatiently, and when she had disappeared I began, not, however, without hesitation, compunction and a feeling that I was playing the fool, to breath as she had directed and to strip off my much-creased and bedraggled clothes. And presently, shivering in the wind, naked as Adam and frightfully ashamed of my thinness, I advanced trepidantly upon three Chinamen, who, smiling broadly, appeared to be awaiting me in the lea-scuppers. These three, suddenly and without warning but with loud grunts and exclamations, seized me and commenced to brush me strongly with dry, bristly brushes. They went over me from head to foot with a kind of good-humoured fury until from cold I passed to warm, from warm to fever; and then, just as I thought the intention was to skin me alive, the brushing ceased, the three sprang aside, and I received full upon the back a bucket of ice-cold water thrown with violence.

With a cry between pain, fear and rage, I turned, only to receive a second bucket in the open mouth. Turn and start and twist as I would, there was nothing for me but laughter

and water, and behold, at the very moment when I felt about to die, I began to enjoy myself! And when that sudden and violent bathing was at an end and I stood, streaming sea-water and glowing like a new-cast statue, I felt in my whole being an exhilaration and freedom from care that were wonderful.

But now they came at me with great handfuls of cotton waste, such as is used for cleaning brass, and scrubbed me dry; and then one flung me a kind of pajama suit of thin white cotton; and, being clothed in this, another brought a razor and fresh water and soap and shaved me delicately and quickly. And then they made me drink down a great bowl of water and went about their business smiling.

Bessie now came out of the cabin leading by the hand a little boy. He was dressed in amazing contrast to the Chinamen and to Bessie herself. Indeed, he looked like a miniature viceroy, or princeling, just out of the band-box; from the little skull-cap of brocade with its jade button, to the snow-white socks (or rather mittens, for the big toe had a compartment to itself) he was the pink, I am sure, of Chinese fashion, and the mould of form. He was in a bright sky-blue silk jacket, with white

silk bands to the wide sleeves and white cording low around the throat.

This celestial little garment had been embroidered by witchcraft with butterflies in wonderful soft tints and shades, and birds and flower-pots with flowers growing out of them; and green puppy-dogs with round popping eyes; and little high-arched bridges that crossed streams and led to pagodas and temples; and a thousand and one devices, exquisite in themselves and forming as a whole an effect of magical jewellery. Trousers of a clear, bright green silk, wrapped at the ankles and thrust into the aforementioned white socks, completed the costume; or rather it was completed by the child himself. There was a gravity upon his jolly round face, and a majesty — may I say so? — to his grave, toddling sea-waddle that were the very essence of the picture. He was like a Chinese advertisement of a health food, and as he came toward me, one hand in Bessie's and one resting gravely upon his portly little "tum," famished as I was, I could have cried aloud for joy.

Chinese he seemed from head to toe, but when, after looking gravely in my face for some moments, his sloe eyes closed suddenly and he put back his head and laughed a treble

ghost of that haw-haw-haw of Bessie's, I knew that he belonged to no country, and to no race of men.

Bessie looked me gravely in the eyes.

"Saves a world of explanation," she said, "does n't it — that laugh? Stop laughing, Lichee, you little monkey!"

Lichee broke short off.

"Time Melican man eat," said he.

"Lichee," said I, "you are delightful in conversation."

"Yes," said Bessie, "you're to have food now, on two conditions."

"A thousand!" I cried eagerly.

"First," said Bessie, "you've got to say you liked your bath — we heard him yell, did n't we, Lichee? — and second, you'll chew every mouthful you eat forty times."

"But why?" said I. "Is it a religious rite?"

"No," said Bessie quietly, "it's to make a man of you — and when you're that you can talk about religion. It sickens me to think how you've neglected yourself. Bright enough you are, too, by the shape of your head, to know better! I'd rather see a good solid bar-room drunk than a library skeleton. Come now, shake hands, and forget it!"

She smiled very winningly and we shook hands.

“Melican man eat now?” said Lichee.

“Oh, my friend, my friend!” I cried. And had he been my own I could not at that famished moment have loved him more.

CHAPTER
NINE



BESSIE'S
STORY

I WAS soon enthusiastically taken up with physical training. From the very first the brushings, and the violent baths, the light diet, much chewed, the frequent great drafts of water, and the strong sea air had stirred within me and were bringing to liveliness the germs of health and well-being.

But you will not suppose that the experience with Carrol and his friends was ever long out of mind; nor that I awaited with anything but impatience the decision of the Shantung Company upon the affair of the treasure. They regarded me, after Bessie had told them of it, with an open interest and perhaps a tinge more of zeal in attending to my needs and comforts; and they made me feel that I was no waif upon their charity, but one who paid, or at least made creditable promises of payment for what he got.

But not a word of pro and con upon the adventure itself was to be heard from one of them, nor do I think that they discussed the

matter among themselves. I was suffered to come and go as I pleased; and was encouraged to take a light share in such work as swabbing down the decks, and even learned to stand a trick at the wheel. Nor was I allowed to stand aside when it came to amusements.

“They look up to you,” said Bessie to me once, “because you are an author; writing is sacred to the Chinese, pretty near; or at least it’s the very tip-top thing in good manners; and these boys are n’t the Canton coolie type anyway; they’re North Chinamen, well educated some of them; and they’ve a pretty snug inkling of what’s what.

“They’re certainly different from the Chinamen I’ve seen in America,” I said, “taller and thicker-necked. They don’t look so much like delicate birds. And I’ve never been kinder used by any one — but that, of course, is owing to you.”

“We were slipping along upon a brisk beam wind, with a pleasant bubble of water under the bows and under the leeward rail, while the foam whirled and sudded in our wake. Lichee was in the galley composing sweetmeats with a little help from the cook; Wong was at the wheel, steering with two fingers; Chang and Jili were stripping the morning’s wash from

the windward rigging; and there was a pair of checker players in the shadow of the foresail. But otherwise we had the deck pretty well to ourselves.

"Mrs. Bessie," I said, "just what is the Shantung Company?"

"Do you notice," said she, "that they're all about the same age? Well, they were all students together in some Chinese college and they had advanced views about politics, and China began to get unpleasant for them. So they clubbed together and bought this schooner of a sealer that had to go to jail; and she's been home and country to them ever since. They swore an oath of partnership—to stick together, sink or swim, and to share and share alike—good luck, bad luck, and the whole hog."

"And you, Mrs. Bessie?" I said, after a pause.

"You've *looked* that question more than once," said she, "and you've thought this and you've thought that, till you don't know where I stand on the ladder that has its head at heaven's gate and its feet in hellmuck. . . . Chang's father willed me an interest in the Company and other interests that were nabbed when he died. He was a good man by his

lights; all white under the yellow. . . . I know what they think in Christian countries about white girls that marry Chinks; but I've a bit boy that looks up to me and honours me, and twelve good men and true — ”

“Thirteen,” I corrected. “Not that I want to boast.”

She gave me a grateful look.

“Mrs. Bessie,” I said, “I'm curious as any woman. But I'm no cat. I'd dearly love to have the whole story. Am I going to?”

“It's long,” she said doubtfully. “And it's some tough.”

“And take my word for it,” said I, “that somewhere there's a lot that's fine in it.”

“I married,” she said, “when I was seventeen. He was all kinds of a man, Willy was; ten years older than me; and gentle as they make 'em, and white clean through. He was a born athlete, and a made one—” She smiled: “That's how I come to be such a trainer. At first we lived in 'Frisco, and saved a little money. Then Willy thought he saw a chance to make money in Shanghai—he was a kind of small contractor and there was a boom in building. We went out—that was seven years ago—and Willy'd no sooner got there than he bid for a contract to put up a house in

the English section — just a little two-story house, but with a good profit in it.

“ We kept house in two rooms just on the edge of the Chinese quarter, and I was happy all day long, even when Willy was away looking after his contract. I guess a woman's happiest when she's seeing one man, or looking forward to seeing him, and knows he'll come to her sober and gentle and loving.

“ There was only one thing we wanted, and that was a kid; but there was nothing doing. Willy got mixed up in local athletics, and boxed and swam races and played ball when he had the chance. And sometimes we'd hire a couple of ponies — we could n't either of us ride to save our necks — and go rides in the country. One day Willy got off at a piece of old wall to see how it was put together. He said it was 'curious construction,' that was his word. And I told him not to go near the old thing, because it would fall on him. But he smiled and went up close to the wall and poked it and looked it over and got out his note-book to make a sketch — and then I saw the thing totter and I screamed; and Willy jumped, but not quick enough. He was pinned by the legs, and by the time I got to him he had fainted dead away. I got some Chinamen that

were working in a field to help me, and we got the stones off his legs, and they got a couple of poles and made a kind of litter and carried him back to the city. Once Willy opened his eyes, and said 'curious construction.' But the rest of the time he was unconscious.

"I gave those Chinamen all the money I had, because they'd acted so white, and had in the best doctor in Shanghai to look at Willy. He looked and went away and came again with another doctor and a nurse, and they cut one of Willy's legs off at the ankle and the other above the knee . . . but he didn't get well. He just seemed to live, and that was all. They said his back was hurt, and his insides, they thought, but were n't sure. Willy's contract went to pot, and the money mixed up in it.

"I saw the consul, and told him we were stone broke, and he said he'd do what he could. It was n't much. He said he'd have Willy put in a free hospital, and get me a job as chambermaid in an English family he knew, or buy me a steerage passage home, whatever I chose. But I couldn't keep Willy on chambermaid wages, and I wouldn't leave him, and I told the consul so. He kind of hemmed and hawed and looked around to see if any one was listen-

ing, and then he says: 'Look here,' he says, 'what if I were to pay you eight dollars gold a week?' 'Well,' says I, 'what if you were?' Before he got more than six words out of his mouth I grabbed the heavy ruler that was on his desk and brought it down on his white head. And the last I saw of him he was face down among his papers, bleeding like a stuck pig.

"He did n't prosecute in the courts; but he prosecuted behind my back — gave me a bad name and said I'd made certain propositions to him that had shamed his white hairs. And he took care that nobody should help me or employ me. And a day or so later the tradesmen — I guess he set 'em on — began to want their money and I did n't know where to turn.

"Well, one morning an old Chinaman come to see me. He was old as the hills, and the brocades on him were worth a thousand dollars gold if they were worth a cent. He had two servants, one to carry his fan and purse and umbrella, and one to roll cigarettes for him; he smoked 'em as fast as they could be rolled. He was a wonderful looking old guy; he had black-rimmed specs three inches across and perfectly round, and there wasn't a level patch of skin on his face — it was just ten hundred

million little wrinkles. He talked good English — the best I ever heard a Chinaman talk. He began by saying that he was seventy years old and that I must n't be angry with him at anything he said.

“He said he'd heard about me and all my troubles and how my own people would n't help me; and that he himself, being a sporting man, had come to make me a proposition. He said he'd pay me fifteen dollars gold a week — no writing, just his word and mine — as long as Willy lived. He said he'd seen the doctor, and the doctor said Willy might live, and might not. If Willy lived a year the contract ended, with good wishes on both sides. But if Willy died, I was to become the property of the old Chinaman. He said his chief business was buying pretty girls and ‘placing them,’ he called it. I said, ‘What if *you* die?’ and he said the bank would go on paying the money just the same, for a year, but that I would n't be bound to anything. Well I thought it over. It sure was a sporting proposition on the old Chinaman's part, and I was just as sure that Willy would live! And if he did n't — why, it did n't seem to matter what happened to me.

“Every week the money come in regular

by messenger from a Chinese bank; and once in a while Hoang Lo, which was the old fellow's name, sent me a basket of fresh eggs with his compliments, and called once to say that he only sent me eggs because if he sent anything else I'd be afraid he'd put poison in it for Willy.

"It was having broken his contract that killed Willy as much as anything. He was that honest, sir, and open; he just couldn't bear it. But he lived long after the doctor said he would. It seemed as if he knew that he had to live a year to make things come out right for me. But of course he did n't know.

"When the 'leventh month was under way I began to see a good deal of Hoang Lo. He came pretty nearly every day, and he was that kind and generous that I got to think a lot of him. That's funny, Mr. Parrish. He was planning to set me well along the downward path, and yet I got to like him and look forward to his visits and his talk. He was wise. And he saw how I felt about Willy—that nothing else mattered, and he got fond of me.

"Two days before the year was up, Willy began to sink. He roused up enough to say good-by and to give me a lot of advice about what to do when he was n't there any longer

to look after me! And I said yes to everything, and promised everything he asked, if only to make his mind easy about me. About sundown that night he got unconscious, and though he did n't die just then, he never spoke again.

"When Hoang Lo learned that poor Willy was sinking, he came round at once. And he had a smile on him that was n't 'Now I've got you' or 'I told you so' or 'You lose, I win' or anything like that. It was the smile old friends put on when they're sorry, too. He said that he would bring a Chinese doctor, who had studied in Germany, to see Willy, if I'd only believe that it was n't just a scheme to put the finishing touches to Willy before the year was up. I trusted the old man and it pleased him.

"When the Chinese doctor saw Willy and took his pulse he just shook his head. He said Willy couldn't get well; there was no use bothering. He said, though, when Hoang Lo asked, that oxygen and electricity might keep life flickering on for a day or two. And then what does the old Hoang Lo do but give orders to have Willy kept alive as long as possible and not to spare any expense! So the Chinese doctor he sent for oxygen and things and his slippers, and stayed by Willy till the end. . . .

And the end came six hours after the year was up.

"I'd dried all my tears out weeks before. I was that tired with watching and grieving — I just collapsed.

"Hoang Lo made all the arrangements for burying Willy, and paid for them. Then he waited till I was able to talk. And then he said he knew I'd have kept my contract if Willy had n't lived, and that he always was at the service of honourable persons. What was I going to do now? I said 'It was through you he lived out the year. God bless you, Hoang Lo, you did what you could for us; you're dead white. The letter of the contract's broken, I know. But it's a quibble of your making.'

"He just smiled. He said that long since he'd made up his mind that I was n't any common trash to be sold for so much gold. He said I was a pearl, not a woman. And first thing I knew, the old fellow had proposed matrimony as honourable as a Chinese can. Maybe if I'd been myself I'd have turned him down, but I was sick with watching and waiting and I was sick with fever, too, though I did n't know it at the time. And I suppose it came to me that marrying a Chinaman old

enough to be my grandfather was n't like marrying a young one. The last I remember till I came to my senses weeks later in Hoang Lo's house — and he had tan-bark spread in the street to stop the noise — was dropping at his feet and crying against his knees, and his hand patting my shoulder."

The honest tears streamed down Bessie's face, and for some minutes she could not go on.

"Well," she said, "Lichee came and old Hoang Lo died, and left a big property to Chang and the kid and me; but the viceroy kicked up a political mess and robbed right and left, until we had nothing to fall back on but the Shantung shares.

"Now you've heard the whole of my hard-luck story. And whether I acted right or wrong does n't matter a hang. But I do know that having made my bargain, it was right for me to stick to it — and try to be cheerful in it — and now the boys are happier and more content for my presence on this ship, and kinder. Do I look after them all, the best I can, and nurse them when they're sick and laugh them out of the sulks and keep them away from drugs — or don't I? As God's good, Jim Parrish, I think I've done as well by my circumstances as many a luckier woman

has done by hers! What the people who sit up to judge forget is just this: that God's so bright he can shine light down into the blackest hole! And it's not Tom, Dick or Harry that can stop him, Mr. Parrish, and you can put that in your pipe and smoke it."

She had become very vehement, and her eyes shone with a splendid valorous look, and dared me, as it were, to contradict her. But nothing was further from my mind; I had for her at that moment but one feeling, and that was unshakeable admiration. For it seemed to me that the outcast shone very brightly out of the darkness into which she had been thrust.

CHAPTER
TEN



TWO SIDES
OF
A RESCUE

HAD Lichee been wholly white he must have been outrageously spoiled; but the thousands of generations of courteous and polite children that lay behind him on the one side were not easily to be shunted off. I may say, I think, for a Chinese child he *was* spoiled; but as white children go, he was an angel. Always there was to be found one of the Shantung Company in a playful mood, ready to carve potatoes into dragons; to make and fly a kite off the stern; to ride him pick-a-back, or to roll and wrestle with him upon the deck. Or he might, if he liked, go aloft in a wicker basket for all the world like a bright little, fat little bird in a cage.

In a world where his word was law, Lichee never sulked; and, in a position to command, had his way most often either by circuitous intriguings or by the most direct, frank and engaging begging. The bowels of those yellow men yearned over the child; and I must believe that the parts of him that were Bessie —

the rollicking, infectious laugh, the sudden wistfulness, the sturdy fearlessness, had drawn them a little from their own civilisation toward ours. There was many a burst of gaiety aboard the *Shantung*, many a kind and thoughtful deed, many a well engineered surprise party with the giving of pleasure for its object, and many a merry joke was passed for the sake of joking. I have seen better moralists who were less kind; richer men who were less generous; ministers of the gospel who, take them for all in all, have seemed to me less Christian. And I am quite sure that I have never been thrown among men who were so clean; so zealous to tub; so indefatigable with the tooth brush. As for little Lichee, when he was not dressed like a fairy-story he was naked as a cherub, now snowy with lather and now streaming with rinsings.

For my part I began, as Bessie said, "to flesh up," to develop a latent, distinct, if awkward, celerity, and to grow strong in the muscles. If only for that I blessed the woman; but I had stronger reasons to bless her — for a newer, franker, honester outlook upon life; for a strengthening of heart and moral courage. Indeed, as the saying is, I was by way of becoming a new man; the air looked no

longer like torn and dirty lace to tired eyes; the sea-water washed the tired lines out of my face; and the strong fresh wind from the west blew colour into my cheeks. I learned to wrestle a little; to get a little way up a swinging rope; and to balance a broom upon my chin (a fine exercise, by the way, in a rolling sea).

To keep the mind on edge, I began to pick at Chinese, and, thanks to a prodigious power for remembering, was soon on terms of equality with — Lichee. Beyond that, however, I discovered the road into the celestial tongue to be thorny, steep and abounding in blind alleys. But the formidable efforts that I made got me into better liking and put me upon terms of real friendliness with my teachers. English, though, remained the chief medium of intercourse, for, as Jili courteously remarked, “You think Chinaman no good Melican talkee; me think you hellee dam bad Chinaman talkee.”

It was not till we were off the Isthmus, stewing in a kind of unexpected doldrums, that the Shantung Company called a meeting to which I was not invited and at which, so Bessie hinted to me as she went forward with the others, the matter of the treasure was to be seriously considered. I was sent for after about

an hour and asked to repeat as much of the famous paper as I could remember, the items of treasure and as much as possible of the note at the end.

After the naming of each item — and I had the most of them pretty pat — Bessie translated into Chinese, but none of the men interrupted or commented in any way.

When I had finished with the items and with the note at the end I was asked for my own personal beliefs in the matter; heard without comment, and sent aft. I had more the feelings of one whose veracity is at stake than of one whose personal fortunes hang upon a hair.

Yet anxiety upon the latter point kept me moving — impelled me to affect a calmness that I was far from enjoying; to examine with sudden interest the spokes of the wheel; to test with a finger-nail the rigidity of the sun-softened pitch between the deck planks; and to scan from time to time the westward weather for signs of a returning wind.

To say that the *Shantung* was without motion and the sea smooth as a lake would not be strictly true; yet what way she had was by the stern, and so broad, so roundly moulded and slow going were the ocean swells that you could not have said to the moment when the schooner

finished riding and began to fall. The damp, scorching atmosphere was unsealike, and suggested (though there was nowhere to be seen any thickening along the eastern horizon that might have been land) the proximity of Panama with its hammering sun and its tumultuous vegetation. Twice in New York City I have felt a similar wet, burning heat; once in the hot room of a Turkish bath, and once as a little child in Trinity church of an Easter morning. Upon that latter occasion, moistly clasping a little palm branch, I had fainted away, to my father's intense mortification. And now, looking over the stern and seeing an actual palm branch floating in the water, the whole scene was recalled to me with the vividness of a view thrown suddenly upon a blank sheet by a stereopticon.

I remembered, too, with a certain dismalness, how my father, from the vivid heights of a health that was almost gross, had used to cut at my puniness with his sharp, ever-ready tongue. Yet here was I, whom the doctor had so often given up, a picture of so much health as is consistent with leanness; and there, in old Trinity graveyard, dead before the prime of life, lay the corpse of my father, who had thought to bow the whole world by sheer

strength of mind and body, and to live a hundred years. I remember he used to plant acorns that his old age might be solaced with the majesty of oaks; and yet at this writing the tallest of those trees is no higher than the grave is deep.

The *Shantung*, impelled by a deeper current, perhaps, leisurely overhauled the palm branch as it passed slowly forward, almost grazing her side. The thing itself must have seemed desirable to Lichee, and its proximity an irresistible temptation. The bright flashing of the child's gay jacket, seen with the tail of an eye, had broken my reverie; I looked up in time to see him jab clumsily at the branch with an unwieldy boat-hook and, his round face expressing solemn surprise rather than fear, topple slowly over the low rail into the sea.

I ran for the spot, with no very definite idea what I should do when I got there; stubbed one naked foot cruelly against a ring bolt, and, by a dive as clean as it was unpremeditated, entered the water almost on top of the struggling child. My left hand, indeed, must have passed under his jacket, or become entangled with him in some way; anyhow I dragged him under with me, and our reappearance together had all the hall-marks of a *bona fide* rescue.

Yet all was not well. The child was unconscious; we were a dozen feet from the schooner's side; my left arm, wrenched backward against the impetus of the dive by the resistance of Lichee's stationary weight, was useless; indeed, half full of sea-water and consternation, I must, if left to myself, have gone down with the boy. Yet help was near; for my sound arm in its thrashing fell suddenly with jarring violence upon the boat-hook, and that straw's worth of additional buoyancy preserved us. A second more and the half of the Company were around us, swimming like yellow-faced seals and completing the work of rescue which I had accidentally begun.

The incident, and the praise with which I was overwhelmed, were the more distasteful from the fact that, if I had not tripped, I might have reached Lichee from the schooner's deck, and rescued him neatly, without so much as wetting my shirtsleeves. I tried religiously to defend myself from praise; explained the whole affair to Bessie again and again at the top of my voice, but all to no purpose. I could no more have persuaded those grateful hearts that I was not the saver and restorer to them of their mascot than that I was the Emperor of China in disguise. Added to their gratitude

was admiration for the presence of mind that in the midst of peril, in the very jaws, as it were, of sharks and sea-devils, had not omitted to rescue so insignificant an object as a boat-hook.

But the true importance of the incident to this narrative is that it served to make up the Shantung Company's mind about the treasure. As a mere favour, Bessie said, they would now have gone for me through a thousand thousand hells.

As for Lichee, he was not long coming to, and having thrown up the sea-water which he had swallowed, signified that if he might become the undivided possessor of a clasp-knife such as grown men use, he would think favorably of continuing to exist. Otherwise, we might as well look forward to the worst.

CHAPTER
ELEVEN



MRS.
CUNNINGHAM

IN the thought that having voted for treasure-hunting the Shantung Company would make quick work of their business in Lima I was mistaken. And when, in my impatience, I complained to Bessie that we were wasting some precious time, she begged to differ, and soon had me in agreement with her.

“If you think the boys are loitering,” she said, “let me tell you what Chang says. He says he knows the *Calliope*, of old, for a rotten, slow-going tub. If she *has* got a start of us, by this time, and if she *does* get to the place ahead of us, who cares? Will they get that stuff out of the mud under one month — two months? I ask *you*. And every two-bit piece that they *do* get up, before we blow in, is just so much in our pockets for the trouble of taking it.”

“Why, Bessie,” said I, “would n’t they have something to say about that? My idea was to get there before them and lift the stuff and vanish — leaving a few good guesses behind.”

“ That was your idea, was it ? ” she said with some asperity. “ Well, the sooner you forget it the better. There is just one chance in a million of getting through the business without a fight. That ’s reason *one* for delay; Chang ’s trying to get hold of a second-hand Maxim and some Winchesters — we ’ve only a couple aboard. Reason two: we ’re fitted for the tropics, or ’Frisco at the worst. Nice you ’d look in those cotton pajamas sitting on an iceberg! We ’ve *got* to have warm clothes; and Chang ’s going to put a stove in the cabin and one in the fore-castle. Reason three: who ’s going to do the diving, and how ’s it going to be done? If Chang can hire it done, you bet he ’ll hide it; if he can’t he ’s got to get hold of a diving-suit — two of them in case one breaks — and do the trick himself. Reason four: he ’s going to make the best dicker he can on the present job, in case the lost galley-west does n’t turn up. If that is n’t sense, Jim, prove it! And if you don’t, why put it in your pipe and smoke it ! ”

“ Thanks,” I said, “ I ’ll smoke.”

“ Good,” said Bessie. “ Then climb into your shore togs and show me the town — will you? I ’m kind of bashful about leaving the ship; and—but maybe you ’d rather not be seen walk-

ing with me. Tell me the truth, Jim; I won't mind much."

"Bessie!" I cried indignantly, and hurried off to change my clothes. And when we got ashore — indeed Bessie had made herself very trig and smart for the occasion — we walked up from the wharves and promenaded the more fashionable streets, looking the parts of very usual travellers. Only somehow it seemed to me that Bessie was prettier than the run of white women in outlandish places, as I was surely taller and thinner than the average man. She had, too, an eye for colour, humour and observation that would have done credit to a Davis or a Steevens; and I found myself seeing a thousand things that I must else have missed, and livening the hours of the Spanish siesta with joyous laughter. It was by no means my first trip ashore; for three weeks had passed since we anchored off the Peruvian capital; but it was the one that I shall best remember.

I had long since become accustomed to Bessie's careless and rough habit of speech; no longer sat in judgment upon her Chinese marriage; and thought her, as indeed she was, the very best friend I had in the world. She was the most sympathetic listener, the sanest, kind-

est adviser, the merriest companion, the most devoted mother, and the most distinguished example of making the best of things that ever I saw. A man could not have sailed long aboard the *Shantung* without making a confidant of Bessie. She would have your dearest secrets out of you in no time, and make them her own. Had I been a murderer, I must have told Bessie upon some night of stars; and the girl into whose face the little terriers looked was a piece of ancient history to her, yet one upon which she loved to harp. I had told her in the beginning that that jig was up, but she would have none of it; I was to go back to my own place, rich and strong, and to make the running with a high hand; yes, and at the wedding breakfast I should receive a telegram or a cable, unsigned, with the words, "I told you so."

" 'Now who told me so?' you'll say," said Bessie, "'who was it, now?' And you'll put your mind to raking in the ashes of all you've ever done and been and known, and maybe you'll remember after a while and say: 'That was that woman on the *Shantung*.' "

"Yes," I said, "Bessie, I'll probably forget you quicker than any one I've ever known."

There 's nothing about you to impress a man, unless it 's your general unkindness and bad temper! ”

“ I wonder,” said Bessie, much mollified, “ if you and she 'll ever talk about me.”

“ If she and I ever talk together again in this world, Bessie,” I said, “ you 'll be in it.”

“ Would n't mentioning me,” said Bessie, “ be — oh, like saying things that can't be said to young girls? Better cut me out, Jim, when you leave us.”

“ When I leave you, Bessie? ” said I. “ And I 'm not sure that the Shantung Company will ever see the last of me. When have I ever been so well — or so happy — or so kindly treated? Never, and never shall be again. If,” said I jocosely, “ you were a smoker, Bessie, I should tell you what to put in your pipe.”

Lima is a quiet place in the heat of the day. And the streets which had shown a certain activity when we came ashore, had become gradually deserted. Even our shadows hid themselves, as Bessie remarked. You could look the length of a street and see nothing living, unless a scavenging rat or so attracted by the security of the blazing stillness, and although shops remained open, it was no un-

common thing to see the proprietor, through the dirt and fly specks of the windows, sound asleep in an easy-chair.

In the midst of this silence then, broken only by the sound of our own footsteps, Bessie spoke so suddenly as to startle me.

"Jim," said she, "there's that woman again."

"Is it?" said I, "your eyes are sharper than mine — where?"

"She's pulled her head in now," said Bessie. "She's in the — one — two — in the ninth doorway on the right."

Even as Bessie spoke the woman put her head out, looked our way, appeared to hesitate, and once more drew back.

"Right about face," said Bessie, "we'll see if it's accident, or if she's really following us."

So we faced about, turned the first corner, and there waited. Presently we heard swift steps and a moment later the woman herself turned the corner, and stood as if petrified at finding herself trapped.

"Well," said Bessie, "what is it? You've been following us all morning. If it's just bad manners, cut it out; if you really want something, why speak your piece!"

The woman drew a long breath. She was no

longer young nor pretty; but she had great stag eyes and wonderful white teeth.

"I ask pard-on," she said in timid, faltering and very pretty Spanish English.

"And that's granted," said Bessie.

"I want for to ask," said the woman, "are you of the Unie-ed State?"

"Sure pop," said Bessie, "and then some. Why?"

"Always," said the woman, "if I see people of your con-tree, I have to ask them if they have seen my frien' up there. I have write, and write an' get no letter back."

On Bessie's lips I distinctly saw the word, "Nutty!" form, but she did not utter it. I put in quickly and as kindly as I could speak:

"What's your friend's name? Perhaps I do know of her, or of him."

And the name she gave almost knocked me silly. It was Roy Cunningham.

"The crew-man!" exclaimed Bessie.

"Wot — you say?"

"She says — why yes we — that is I, know a Roy Cunningham — knew such a man."

"Know — knew!" her voice grew suddenly shrill and tense. "You know him?"

"I knew him," I said.

She *did n't* say "Then he is dead." She

seemed to see straight through me and beyond me, and she said:

“Then he is murder’!” And she followed the one second-sight blow with another. “Carrol — It was Carrol keel him!”

She swayed dizzily, and I caught her. In a moment the faintness had passed.

“We can’t talk here,” said Bessie. “Where?”

“I am Mrs. Cunningham,” said the woman, “you come with me.”

She hurried us through a network of side streets, and led us, finally, into a little wine shop, cool and pleasantly greenish after the white glare of the streets. “Here,” said the woman, “I treat you with chocolate, and we shall talk. That is our table — you jus’ wait, and I give the order.”

Bessie and I seated ourselves at a round iron table, painted white and much scratched with names, initials and knife-point drawings.

“Bessie!” I cried in sudden excitement, and I pointed to a name, very neatly executed.

“‘*Espiritu Santo*,’” said she; “the name of the galleywest!”

“And look here,” said I, making a fresh discovery, “‘Roy Cunningham!’”

“ And here ’s his name again,” said Bessie, “ in a heart with another name — Carmen — ”

“ Yes,” said I, “ and here are his initials and a picture of something — I can’t make out what, can you? ”

“ Why,” said Bessie, “ it ’s a diver’s helmet, is n’t it? ”

“ Either that,” said I, “ or a skull. His writing is better than his drawing. He must have sat often at this table, Bessie, with his girl and his dream.”

In the act of crossing one leg over the other my knee struck a hard knot under the table; upon investigation it came off in my hand, and proved to be a lump of hardened chewing-gum, and imbedded in the surface that had been flattened against the table was a paper, folded many times. We unfolded it, and read in English:

I get your word and hide; but Carrol get me. He break my finger to make me tell — one after the other — but I not tell. And I not believe he think I know. He gone north after you. Something tell me you come back, and we sail once more and find that gold where we leave him. Carrol have me put in prison. I am just out. Some of my finger not bend, and are all grow crooked; but you not mind, my dear, not you? I have our baby in prison, but he is dead when he come. I think it is because Carrol hurt me so, and trample on me to make me tell. I love you forever. C —.

"My God!" said Bessie.

A shadow fell between us, and we looked up into the face of the woman. She reached a small distorted hand toward the paper.

"Carmen!" I exclaimed.

"Yes," she said, "please give me that letter. That not mean' for you."

"Was it meant for Roy Cunningham?" I asked.

She scrutinised me for some time with her great stag eyes.

"What of it?" she said.

I rose and offered her a chair.

"Please sit down and I will tell you what I know about him."

She sat down, all of a huddle, so to speak.

"Did Carrol kill him?" she asked presently in a quiet voice.

And I told her from the beginning all that I knew of the man guessed to have been Cunningham; of his murder; of his eyes and wounds opening at the approach of Carrol; and of those subsequent events that accounted for our meeting with her in the restaurant.

"Thata Roy," she said, "and Carrol kill him!"

And that was all she said for a time. Then, speaking very gently:

“ I know you not friends with Carrol,” she said. “ I watch you from the door; and I see how them name on thata table estonishe you. Roy love to carve with his knife. And so you going after Carrol and thata treasure? I not care about thata treasure — that is for you — But I like — oh, that only jus’ and fair — that Carrol belong to me.”

Her voice, tired and gentle, did not instil the last phrase with any particular meaning.

“ Why? ” said Bessie. “ Why do you want Carrol? ”

“ Why,” said the woman, “ he not done you no harm — but you think what he do to me. And then ask me why I want of him for? ”

She laid her two little hands, palm down, on the table so that we should see into what distortion and rigidity the bones broken by Carrol had set. They must have been once very pretty, clever little hands. But now, uncombative as I am by nature, the sight of them was like that of a red cloth to a bull. And I felt myself trembling from head to foot with the lust to hunt Carrol down and kill him.

“ Those,” said she, “ were my hands. They used to make the fine lace. Cunningham he my hosband, as thees ring, that I not get off now if I want, show. . . . You listen — ” a

certain vigour animated her gentle voice. “ Roy and I pass our honeymoon in one litter bit sloop lookin’ for thata treasure, jus’ we two of us. It not so easy for to find; and when we find him, we cannot get him up. We not expect do that. We are prospective, what you call him? and if we find there some treasure we are go to form the company, with Roy for leader, and go back to them place with divers and all. Roy dive down just as he is half a dozen time; but the water is too col’ and deep, and we learn more with that sea-glass.

“ The treasure-ship she have struck on a reef of rock and go down into a kind of bowl on the other side; that bowl is almos’ clean rock, no mud, no sand to bury those things — just enough to help hol’ them; and with that glass you can see ches’s, and timbers, and casks, all atangled, and bone and skulls, and fishes dartin’ amongs them — and that bowl have high side so that those things have not been wash out of it, or mos’ of them. If it has not been for those network of timbers, Roy can have get much more; he only get two little bar of gold; and I not let him go down there any more; it is terrible to be all alone in that sloop while he dive; I cannot stand the terror of him.

“ Then we come back here; and met Carrol that Roy have known beforehan’. And he think Carrol was an honest man; and he tell him about that treasure, and the company is form.’ But the agreement say that Roy is to have three-fourth of that treasure; and although Carrol agree and say that was fair, he make up his mind, as these hand show, to get the all of it, or the mos’, for himself.

“ There not time now to tell how he try to murder Roy then, and get that paper, and how he raise those authorities agains’ Roy, and Roy have to escape out of this country. And Carrol follow him, after he is giving up try to make me tell. No time and no use. But listen: I not want that treasure; I only want Carrol. But I am of use to you: I show you the very place; and that not so easy to fin’; because there are days and days when it was too rough to use the glass; and you have search for weeks within a hondred feet of thata place, and not find him — it look easy; off the northwest corner of the islet in shallow water; but that not easy. It take Roy and me one month to find him — ”

Bessie reached out and drew both the distorted little hands into one of hers, and fell to patting them with the other.

“Don’t get excited, you poor little thing,” she said, “and get to thinking we don’t understand. Of course you want to go with us, and see Carrol’s finish; and by the everlasting, you shall!”

Mrs. Cunningham’s great eyes filled slowly with tears, and suddenly overflowed.

“If you’re going to cry,” said Bessie, “you can’t go.” And her own eyes filled and ran over; I think it was those poor little hands that did it. “And — and you can p-put that in your pipe, and smoke it!”

The women dried their eyes presently, and left the restaurant, walking hand in hand like two little children. And I followed them with feelings that I presume to be akin to those of an agitated parent.

CHAPTER XII

MAGELLAN AT LAST

ALTHOUGH we proceeded down the coast in a leisurely manner, anchoring sometimes for a day or two in the chief harbours, a spirit of excitement began gradually to pervade our whole ship's company; until finally Chang, disappointed from port to port in his efforts to secure a Maxim, and an experienced diver to go down in the suits bought in Lima, laid the *Shantung's* course for the western opening of Magellan's Strait.

The bright weather of the tropics went a little farther with us; as in the country a hospitable host sees his departing guests along the road and stands at last waving and smiling until they are hidden beyond the turn. For an hour or two one day we could look back into bright blue Summer; while ahead mists were gathering, and the sea was a cold gray, and the sky. There was an end to happy-go-lucky sailing; and I began at last to appreciate the zeal and devotion of Chinamen to a cause; their delight in what is certain, and their con-

tempt for chance. There seemed to be always some one aloft searching with microscope eyes for flaws in the rigging, greasing blocks and trying ringbolts; piece by piece the spare canvas was overhauled; the mast-stays, and indeed, any main reliance or trifle that might be expected to play traitor and deliver us to the gales. Nor was the general welfare left to the individual when it could be helped; no one went long in wet clothes, whiskey appeared from somewhere on that abstemious ship and was served three times a day like a tonic; the kettle boiled on the galley stove and each man made tea when he liked.

The weather along that last stretch of continent was neither so cold as I had expected nor so violent. The thermometer ranged in the middle forties; the wind from half to three parts of a gale; and of the infinitude of low-hanging gray clouds that swept over us, the one burst and the next passed without bursting. It did not rain all day; but some days it rained a hundred times; and if at times the clouds opened and showed a watery sun, it was seldom at high noon or apt for the navigator.

Yet of all the matters, great or minute, with which Chang was busied day and night (almost), those affecting the navigation of the

Shantung appeared to give him the least anxiety. He was, with his charts and compasses and parallel rulers, his brushes, and cakes of India ink, and, most important of all, the wired frame with its movable beads upon which he could perform any miracle known to mathematics, the plus past master of dead-reckoning. He moved among those unknown seas and currents as certainly, as carelessly, you might say, as a librarian among his books; and only at those rare times when he could prove himself right to an inch by an observation did he display the ghost of an emotion. Then the fires in his black sloe eyes would liven for half a minute and play; or he might have been seen to catch Lichee by the foot and toss him for a double somersault, catching him amid the swing and toss of the ship with the gentleness of a woman and the certainty of fate.

But there was no time now for games and loafings and amusements. The *Shantung*, if never in actual jeopardy, was in the midst of perils and encountered many a chance of mischance; and the characters of the men that sailed her for all that was in them began to be revealed. Hitherto, except that Chang was the captain, and Jili the jester, if I may say so, I had seen little real difference between them.

For weeks I had even thought them to look very much alike; but now it seemēd that Jili was a nervous, anxious man, ready enough to do his duty, and manly enough for that matter, but prone to look with pessimism upon any unexpected opposition of the elements; always the first of the watch to be on deck, but not, I thought, so much from extra vigilance as from the inability to sleep soundly. And he who had always been the first to see or to perpetrate a pleasantry now wore the mask of a dismal and narrow spirit.

But Chang, in bright weather docile, I had sometimes thought, to the point of weakness, never forward in talk, but one who sits back and, yes, *giggles*, appeared now in a wonderful change of colour. Into his voice, higher and more womanish than is common even among Chinamen, there came now the sharp and jarring note of command; and you sprang to obey, moved by the whole strength of your legs plus the impulse of his voice. The company met no more in council to vote upon this measure or that; for decision came from Chang, as lightning from a storm-cloud, and as overwhelmingly struck. I looked upon him no more as on a man of a particular race; but as upon the universal man, born prepared; he was the sea-

man incarnate; the genius of navigation; a figure at once inspiring and formidable. So Columbus may have borne himself, or the indomitable Magellan himself among those very seas.

We knew one morning that in the afternoon we might expect to enter the famous strait, and I cast many an excited look into the gray, streaming weather for the exalted mountains that I believed to guard the entrance. Yet so thick was the weather that I despaired of catching more than a glimpse of that dramatic portal.

As we drew into the coast the wind became a monster to be reckoned with; baffled, I suppose, by the opposition of the southwest Andes, it blew now from the west and now from the east and now in ferocious circles. Once we jibed with a violence that I thought must have torn our masts out of us; and once the *Shantung* ran her bows under solid green water, and it seemed for a moment as if she must go to the bottom of the sea as a toboggan to the bottom of an iced slide. Sleet rather than rain bit the face and blinded the eyes; the rigging gave out sounds as of sudden loud singing, and the wind roared like a bull in the hollow of the ear.

It was about noon that Jili, who was at the wheel, gave a loud cry and jammed us suddenly into the eye of the wind, to hang a minute, and fill once more — and almost as suddenly — upon the starboard tack.

That he alone had seen the little sloop that now passed along our lee rail, almost colliding with us, must be attributed to the fact that all eyes were after mountain-tops rather than sea-levels. But it was lucky for all concerned that Jili had seen her in time to luff.

She was almost thirty feet on the water line; a fat, white, high-bowed little craft that, looking as if she was built of odds and ends of wrecks, behaved like a witch and tore over the great seas, under a mainsail reefed to the size of a bed-spread, like a dolphin. Her course was the same as ours; and before we had outfooted her I read the name *Sting-ray* upon her stern board, in great scrawly letters as if painted by an amateur of shipbuilding. She showed but one man; a middle-aged white man with a black beard tucked into the collar of his oilskin. He sailed his little ship by a ramshackle looking tiller, had a great black drooping pipe in his mouth, and as he came parallel with our stern he turned to us a mild, blue, interested pair of eyes and, freeing one

hand, waved to Jili and smiled on either side of the pipe-stem, as much as to thank that paper-pale celestial for the timely and unspeakably necessary luff.

But it was Chang that had the most interest in the stranger; and he never took his eyes off that brave little ship until she had disappeared in the smother astern. Then, without a word, he turned, and himself relieved Jili at the wheel.

An hour later, trumpeting my hands, for the storm and the rain were making a deafening racket, I ventured to ask him a question.

“How near now?” I cried.

For answer he took an instantaneous hand from the wheel and pointed over his shoulder.

We had indeed passed the portals of the perilous strait without seeing them; but, suddenly, far to starboard, a cloud tore apart vertically like a sheet of paper, and in the swirling rift I saw, for one instant of time, a jagged peak white with eternal snow.

CHAPTER XIII

CHANG GEOLOGISES

THE weather, gray, wet and cold, with high winds and sleet flurries, held up for one piping hot day of unimaginable calm and beauty. From dawn till dark we passed slowly onward between the mountains, their heads dazzling with the low-drawn snow; their feet quietly washed by waters of an equatorial blue; the valleys between them and their steep slopes clothed with sombre forests. In one place a glacier of a bright tint of blue came nearly to the water's edge, and as we passed, a mountainous fragment broke from it and fell roaring. So great was the displacement that the waters rushed from it like a tidal wave and we were treated for some minutes to a nasty, chopping sea.

All that bright hot day we sailed among fragments of ice; among half-submerged rocks from which the dark sea-weeds streamed for hundreds of feet around; rising and falling with the undulations of the sea, like the hair of a swimmer's head. And in those cold

deep waters there was abundance of life as in a tropical forest. Whales and dolphins and seals swarmed; shoals of little fishes passed just beneath the surface, like reflections of silver-lined clouds; vast rocks there were, white with sea-gulls, and even the albatross was no rare sight.

That night the sun went stormily down, his face sullen and crimson, like an angry person's; and we did not see him again for many days. The wind blew up a deluge of sleet and rain; clouds obliterated the mountains; the barometer went down like the sand in an hour-glass; and by midnight we called the women and Lichee, to have them prepared, in case of necessity, for the worst. But we passed through the danger of that night and two nights more, and then, even as we had entered the strait, in the same blither of sleet and mist and strong running seas, we left it and were in the Atlantic at last. Then we laid our course once more south, made the Harbour of Good Success at the entrance of the famous Beagle Channel and, having reached the threshold of our adventure, came to anchor for an earned and necessary rest.

Chang, upon whom the anxieties of the last perilous weeks had fallen, who had guessed, felt,

divined a way, when for the most part there had been nothing to guide him, offered prayers of thanksgiving to the strange brass god in the fore-castle — going down alone and remaining for two hours; he then smoked opium; prepared for him and urged upon him by Bessie; and lay down, an ugly open knife beside him which he swore to use upon the first man that disturbed his sleep, and slept for eighteen hours.

Meanwhile the wind abated, the rain stopped falling, and the weather cleared to a light sunless gray. Chang awoke, we weighed anchor, and sailed into Beagle Channel. The next day we proceeded under shortened sail, with a sharp lookout for signs of the *Calliope*. We might stumble upon her around any headland, and we chose, if possible, in the succinct American, “to see her first.”

About noon the lookout thought he saw far ahead a schooner under full sail; but Carmen, looking long through telescoped hands, became very much agitated, and said that it was no ship but a vast discoloration upon the face of a headland; that she knew it well, now that she saw it, and that in the bay beyond that headland we should find the islet that we had come so far to seek.

As we drew upon the headland, excitement moved among us like some invisible agitator, whose oratory affects different persons in different ways. Chang became terse and morose; Wong displayed a shining face of greed; Jili talked and clattered incessantly like a child's rattle; Bessie had the crimson cheeks and the vivacious, dancing eyes of a girl at the threshold of her first ball; Lichee, perceiving opportunity, snatched it by the hair and dragged it with him into the deserted galley, picked the lock of the jam-locker, and was the first of our company to feel that he had not voyaged in vain.

Carmen, alone, in whom that familiar headland, recalling her lover and her honeymoon, must have stirred the ashes of past joys and suffering into flame, fell into her ordinary calm demeanour.

"Soon now," she said, "we shall eround into that bay and see that rock standing in the middle."

Yet we passed the great headland with its nature-faked schooner and found, it is true, an indentation like a narrow fiord that wound off into the cliffs, but no bay; and a smaller headland; only to find beyond that a third.

"I think after that one," said Carmen. But a fourth confronted us, and then a fifth.

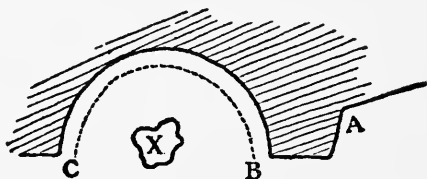
"But it was here — right here. . . . It was right here," she kept saying. "I remember that fine clear day; and that schooner. . . . " And she became confused like a truthful person suspected of lying. Chang and his mathematics bore her out; but neither deep indented bay nor rocky islet appeared. Those minutes, in which what we had sought so far seemed not to be, were terribly trying. We spoke in whispers, as if afraid of waking some one, and were pale, one and all of us.

Where so many eyes, hopes and conjectures were straining forward, Chang alone appeared to be studying the nearby cliffs and steeps themselves, even applying a telescope to the work. He passed an hour thus, interested apparently; perplexed; but undiscouraged. Then, shutting the telescope, he went forward and was no sooner watchfully ensconced in the bows than we opened the mouth of just such a fiord as that beyond the first headland. Then was Chang a man transformed; his grave face wrinkled with smiles and he came bounding aft to the wheel, laughing shrilly. He headed the *Shantung* straight for the mouth of the fiord and, a quarter of an hour later, hav-

ing discovered a suitable anchorage, himself wreathed in smiles, put her into the wind and gave the order to anchor.

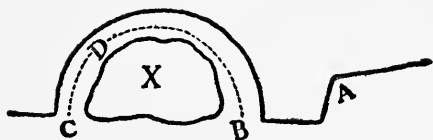
I thought that the tempestuous and nerve-racking passage of Magellan had unhinged the man's mind; but not at all. He sent for his paint-brush, his cake of ink and a sheet of paper. Spreading the latter upon the deck, he knelt by it, and in a ring of completely puzzled faces, began to draw.

The first picture was something like this (only beautifully drawn), and when it was finished he explained. And in English that all might understand.



Touching with his finger the point that I have marked A, he said: "That white schooner ship on rock; all same now." Then running his finger along the dotted line B C, "Him old time bay," he said; and, "him," — here his finger moved to X — "him lilly lock. Chang think lilly lock one time top side fire mountain; Chang think earthquake come along and lift

lilly lock out of bay." He drew a second picture.



Then, his finger back at X, "Lilly lock," he said, "now big lock; fill um old time bay full; not all full, leave lilly bit." And he moved his fingers along the Channel B C; and then, pointing to D, "Chang think *Shantung* stop here; here now —" Here he sprang to his feet, and with sharp, quick gestures: "Chang think," he cried, "no dive down for gold; think climb up, and find him top side lilly lock; Chang look, and think old time lilly lock new time big lock; and Chang think him land now and look lilly more."

"What makes think new land, Chang?" I said.

For answer he pointed into the air, and said:

"See um old rotten whale, topside lilly cliff, all same sea-weed; Chang think earthquake raise um lilly lock; raise um bottom, raise um hell. Chang look and see lilly tlee (tree) all same size Lichee; all tlee lilly tlee; no see big tlee; Chang think land new, all same baby."

CHAPTER
FOURTEEN



JERRY
TOP

OPPOSITE the schooner, although the water in the fiord was smooth as a ribbon, it appeared impracticable to land or make an ascent; nor could we sail any farther owing to the dead calm that prevailed. But it was necessary to investigate Chang's theory of the former islet's having risen; and to find out whether Carrol and the *Calliope* were in the vicinity. So we got one of the boats overboard, and four of us embarked: Chang and I to go ashore at the first favourable place and explore the land; Wong and A Fing to proceed cautiously along the fiord, returning for us about sundown.

I was still wondering why Chang had selected me to be his companion, when he gave an order and the boat was turned at right angles to her course and run head on for a shelving pocket of sand. From this point a wide fissure in the rocks ran backward and upward and appeared to lead easily and directly to the higher levels which we were desirous of gaining. And such, indeed, proved the case; and the ascent,

even to a man encumbered with a heavy Winchester, was by no means difficult. At an elevation of, perhaps, a hundred and fifty feet we came out of the fissure upon a great space of rock and sand whose general level was broken by ridges and fissures.

That the formation had not been long out of water must have been evident to a child; mingled with almost any handful of sand were to be found pieces of fish-bone, and whole and fragmentary shells, the colours still bright and fresh upon them; the profusion of little beech trees two and three feet high, and no higher, was significant — a clean-picked skeleton of a seal or sea-lion disordered by the thrusting stem of a beech; these and a thousand other evidences went far to proving Chang's theory.

Levelish as the plateau was in general effect, and far as the eye carried, yet a thousand men might have been concealed within a stone's throw of us; and for this reason we kept as much to the hollows and below the surface, so to speak, as possible. In the midst, but far off, the plateau rose to a kind of truncated cone; and that, as the highest point visible, we conceived might be the old time islet itself; indeed, a sharp discoloration, extending horizontally and bisecting the cone's altitude, had even at

that distance the look of an old high-water mark; and so sure was Chang that he elected to proceed no farther toward it at that time, but to strike across, at right angles, to the fiord and follow its windings from above. My impulse (and mine are seldom wise) was to hasten to the cone, prove it the ancient islet, find the cove where the galleon had sunk and fill my pockets with treasure. But Chang, uniting as he did the boldness of a fanatic with the caution of a Hebrew, preferred first to locate Carrol and the *Calliope*.

Why I clung to the idea that we had nothing to fear from Carrol and his gang I do not know. Our own perilous voyage, perhaps, had to do with this, and the desolateness of the region in which we found ourselves. Because I saw no sign of man, I was ready to believe that none was to be seen, and yet at the very moment that I was imparting these unreasonable thoughts to the patient Chang there was a man within a dozen feet of us. And, as we learned afterward, he had never been much farther off during the whole of our exploration.

To reveal himself he chose a strategical opportunity, with a way of retreat in reserve. We were passing between two great rocks; he had climbed to the top of that on the right hand

and was watching us, torn between timidity and loneliness. A pebble fell at my feet; I looked up and saw a copper-brown face that my astonished glance seemed to split into an immeasurable grin and to set bobbing up and down. I caught Chang by the arm, and he, too, looked up into that idiotically good-natured face. Black hairs, thick as wool, matted the individual's head; and black hairs, rare as in leprosy, stuck ridiculously from his chin. And he smiled and he bobbed and he bobbed and he smiled.

"Good afternoon," I said, and was astonished to be answered in English.

"Me well, thank you; me hope you very well."

"Who are you?" I asked.

"You not shoot, me come down and tell." He seemed to wait my answer nervously. Chang took the rifle out of my hands and laid it aside, together with his own. Then the grinning savage came out entire upon the top of the rock, and leaped down. He was a little, knotted, bow-legged man and, unless you count a withered looking twig with a few yellow leaves that he carried in one hand, absolutely naked. Now it must be remembered that although I had begun the conversation, it was to Chang

as to the man of importance that the savage at once proceeded to address himself.

Well, there followed so comic a conversation in broken English that politeness alone kept me from splitting apart with laughter; but the subject of their discourse became presently serious enough to have sobered the most unredeemed buffoon.

The savage's English name was Jerry Top. He had sailed five years before the mast on a Yankee whaler, and hence his English and his civilisation. Then, it seems, he had been beaten, unjustly, had leaped overboard in a snow-storm, and now behold him here. Oh yes, thank you, he lived very well. But he was very lonely. He had been a ladies' man in his day; a family man; indeed a man of many families. He wished very much to sail before the mast once more. God knows he was tired of living alone. Would we take him with us?

There were some men — and here his information became startling — over there. They had come in a schooner; and they kept putting different ones of them in a curious suit of clothes and dropping them overboard at the end of a rope. He did not know why. It *was* funny to see; but even he had tired of it, watching them from the cliff. He had ap-

proached them, and they were very bad men. They were not jolly; they never laughed. They were very bad. They had given him a — — good beating. But we were different; we looked like very jolly men. Had we any ladies aboard? He would be glad to see a lady — just to see one. He was terribly lonely. He became embarrassed and attempted to shield his countenance behind the twig which he carried.

Chang reached forward suddenly and took the twig out of the man's hand. He examined it a moment, and then passed it to me, his narrow slant eyes round with astonishment. And with reason, for the thing was no part of a vegetable growth, but a much battered specimen of wonderfully wrought and hammered gold. Chang turned to Jerry Top and smiled.

"You tell where find um," he said, "Chang take you way on ship; kind all same brother. Where you find um?"

Jerry Top turned and started off at full speed; but Chang overtook him.

"To-morrow," he said, "Go back ship now. Chang think lilly."

CHAPTER XV

SOME OF US GO TREASURE HUNTING

WE had not to wait ten minutes at the landing place for the return of Wong and Ah Fing. These at first were very big with news; but collapsed like balloons on learning that we, too, knew that the *Calliope* was somewhere along the fiord; we laughed, though, with a common impulse, to think of Carrol and his gang so absurdly employed in diving. Jerry Top laughed too, very heartily, but he could not have explained why.

It was evident that Carrol had not guessed at the change of topography which the region had so recently undergone; and Chang himself must have been longer in finding it out if he had not had Carmen and her clear memory aboard the *Shantung* to spur his ingenuity. We congratulated ourselves heartily upon the situation; and it was odds but that we could lift the bulk of the treasure, and get away with it, while Carrol continued to explore the bottom of the fiord. He might, I told myself, so employ himself for the rest of the time for

all I cared. And the general wish was to leave him severely alone, rascal and murderer though he was.

Carmen, however, wished in the frank Spanish manner to be less subtly revenged, and made no bones about saying so. And she took no part in our premature rejoicings, but looked on us coldly as on people who had cheated her, treating no one to a smile but Jerry Top. He, indeed, was deserving of smiles; for no sooner had he set foot upon the schooner than he became the incarnation of childish joy let loose. We had great ado to catch him, and clothe him decently; he ran hither and thither like a mon-goose, poking his nose into the cabin, into the fore-castle, flashing brownly aloft, sliding with furious speed down the jibstay; giggling, leaping and cracking his heels together, and snapping his fingers; and firing off broadside after broadside of his ridiculous and profane English. And when we waked him the next morning at dawn, and told him that he must act as guide to the place where he had found the golden twig, he flew into a childish passion of reluctance at the idea of quitting the ship.

As we presumed on many loads of treasure in the course of the next few days, it seemed best to move the *Shantung* until she lay opposite

the little beach where Chang and I had landed; but as there was not a breath of wind we were obliged to take to the boats, and tow her. And a slow, dismal process it was. But all things have an end, and at last she was snugly anchored in the new berth, perhaps a hundred fathoms from the landing place. We cut a pack of cards to see who should go treasure hunting, and who should stay at home and keep ship. Of the latter were Bessie and Carmen, willy nilly; and after the first round of cutting, it appeared that Jili, much to his disappointment, must also remain. Another round disposed of Wong, and still another of Ah Fing. Chinamen are proverbially great gamblers; and the excitement displayed upon the present occasion was no exception to the rule. You might have thought that the treasure itself was to belong to those who went ashore, instead of the more arduous task of hunting for it. Yet had we but known it, we were playing for higher stakes than gold and gems, and, with the exception of Jerry Top and myself, those who stayed aboard the *Shantung* were, for a time, the lucky ones.

The shore party, led *ex-officio* by Chang, consisted of Jerry Top (once more allowed the privilege of nakedness), Wu Lo, San Lo, Ho-

ang, Man Lo, myself; and at the last moment that little beggar, Lichee, slipped into the boat, and resisted ejection so firmly and plaintively that Chang, usually firm and decided, could not make up his mind to disappoint him. The chords of discipline were relaxed, and Chang complained sheepishly that he would, if necessary, carry the child upon his shoulders; the ways of children were mysterious; it might be that Lichee would be the grain thrown into the scale of chance that would bring us luck. He ordered Wu Lo and Hoang to give way, and presently we had landed and hauled out the boat on the beach. With the exception of Jerry Top who carried two spades and was very sulky at finding himself once more ashore, each man toted a Winchester and an empty breadsack; and Hoang, a wonderfully powerful fellow, had in addition a pickaxe and a package containing food. By a common impulse, we turned before commencing the ascent of the fissure and waved to our friends aboard the *Shantung*; and Bessie flung us a frank shower of kisses (I believe I was included) and snatching up a megaphone, called in her large, humorous voice:

“Don’t come back, Jim, without my tarara.”

Then we turned and began to ascend. It

was an easy climb for grown men, but very trying, I expect, to the short, dimpled legs of Lichee. And it was delicious to observe the manifest determination of the child not to abuse his privileges by making a nuisance of himself. He fell repeatedly, but treated such mischances with the quiet contempt which they deserved, and made up for them by redoubled efforts. He must have been on the point of bursting when at last we reached the plateau, and the going made less savage assaults upon the heart and lungs.

CHAPTER XVI

THE AMBUSH

JERRY TOP was for making by the shortest line for the truncated cone that Chang and I had decided to be the old time islet. But Chang, the ultimate destination being once indicated, himself assumed the part of guide, choosing a route which, if at times anything but direct, kept our heads below the general level and our feet upon substances that left no mark. It would not do, he said, for Carrol or one of his men to come by chance upon a broad trail, and follow it to where the treasure lay. There must be no trace of our comings or goings, else the business upon which we were engaged must be discovered. Not to hurry breathlessly forward rent the heart; but no one except the irrepressible Top thought for one moment of going against Chang.

Once we heard a shot from far off to the left in the general direction of the *Calliope*, and we could see the thin smoke of a fire towering to the sky; and once a flock of crows flew suddenly upward from a distant hollow, cawing

angrily as if they had been disturbed in the midst of a feast; but of other disquieting signs we had none. Nor had we need of exterior excitement, for that furnished by the quest on which we were engaged, and every man's inward anticipations sufficed. I may liken my feelings to those of a nervous bridegroom on his way to church, sure that he is late and believing every watch to be a liar.

About nine o'clock we were in the shadow of the cone, and twenty minutes later we were looking down into a kind of a bowl, the bottom choked with sand and little beech trees. The bowl had the exact bearing to the cone that the submarine berth of the *Espiritu Santo* had had to the rocky islet off which she went down, and it was with a kind of galvanic spasm of excitement, and (I think) dread, that I leaped into the place, and plunged my hand into the sand as if each grain of it must prove a gold coin. A sharp exclamation from Hoang brought me to my feet. He had found, not a bar of gold, but a black and rotted fragment of timber. It went rapidly from hand to hand, and we ejaculated and exclaimed; and swore that it was a part of a ship. But if we had expected (and I for one had) to find all manner of precious things laid out as on a shelf

in Tiffany's we were doomed to disappointment. If the treasure was anywhere in that bowl of rock, it was beneath the accumulation of sand and beech leaves that choked the place, and we must dig. But where to begin? Even Chang was at a loss; he looked across the place, and around it, and up and down it, and rested his chin upon the heel of his hand, and frowned; then, quite suddenly, and without any change of expression, as one of those persons gifted with the ability to find four-leaved clovers stoops and picks one surely from a clump where all the others have but three, so Chang stooped, and picked from the sand between his feet a raw green emerald as big as a California cherry. He held it between his thumb and forefinger and turned it slowly this way and that for all to see. Then, pointing between his feet:

"Chang think, dig here," said he, and stepped back.

At Hoang's second powerful thrust, the edge of his spade struck with a kind of chug into something solid. He paused, grinned from ear to ear, and, as an actor sure of his effect:

"Him feel like gold," said he, and with a quick, deep scoop he brought up, upon the broad of the spade, a chunky ingot of the virgin metal.

Then, indeed, the digging became fast and furious, with the two spades, the pick and bare hands; even Jerry Top caught the excitement, and began to dig like a dog, stooping and sending a shower of sand backward between his legs. As luck would have it, we had lighted first of all on the ingots, long since burst from their chests and scattered, and to be found now in twos and threes and now singly; and often for long periods of furious digging not at all. We dug as men eat who have a train to catch; I have never seen men in such a passion of hurry; nor do I exclude myself. I dug myself to the verge of exhaustion, and kept on digging. I was dimly aware that it had come on to rain; that it was pouring; that I had a great to-do keeping my own private excavation from filling, and could make but precious little progress downward or laterally; and still I dug, bare handed, with torn nails and bleeding knuckles.

We dug without rest, one and all of us, not excepting Lichee, from half past nine until one o'clock. Then the pouring rain became a veritable deluge, and upon the sharp and thrice repeated command of Chang we stopped reluctantly.

The gold was parcelled out, and loaded into

the strong bread bags; even Lichee was given an ingot, and leaving the spades and the pick, we began to climb out of the bowl. I remember laughing, aching as I was with fatigue, to think how easy it had been to reach the place, poor; how arduous it was to leave it, rich.

Owing to the inclemency of the weather, we began the return journey with less caution; assured that none would be abroad to spy upon us, and that the rain would soon obliterate all tracks. Chang in the lead moved very swiftly, and it was only by the most strenuous and courageous exertion that for a time I kept his pace. Then I began to lag behind, and Lichee, glad of an excuse to ease his fat little pins, lagged with me. What with the digging, and the excitement, and the gold I carried and the rifle, I was near dead, and soon came to the conclusion that I must lighten my burden or incontinently collapse. As the rifle seemed of no particular use, I laid it aside together with my cartridge belt in the cleft of a great split rock, whence I should have no difficulty in recovering it next day; and once more dragged myself onward.

After many ages of time, I saw that Chang, now far ahead, had reached the upper end of the fissure that marked the termination of the

journey; and as the rain had now settled into a light drizzle, I made up my mind that I would sit down if only for a moment, and rest.

“Lichee,” I said, “Melican man no can do; sit down or bust.”

So I sank upon a rock with a groan of relief, and Lichee, his lips scornfully curling, stood waiting until I should be ready to go on.

I watched Chang and the others disappear one by one into the fissure; Hoang, the last to go down, turning at the last moment and beckoning impatiently to me to follow. And I had at last risen to do so when I saw a bulky bearded man (and even at that distance I knew him for Carrol despite the beard) rise from behind a rock, step to the brink of the fissure, and lean cautiously forward until he could look down into it. Then, freeing one hand from the rifle that he carried, he made a gesture of beckoning, and seven more men emerged from their hiding place, and joined him. A moment the eight stood, looking down upon the heads of Chang and the others, surmising, perhaps, the contents of those obviously ponderous bread bags. Then, and the thing was so sudden that I had not even the time to shout a warning, the eight, as one man, put their rifles to their shoulders, depressed the muzzles to the per-

pendicular, and fired a broken murderous volley. One harsh, sharp cry as of a man in his mortal agony came from the fatal depth of the fissure, and no more.

And I, seized by an accursed, unmanly, damned panic, slipped from my load of gold, caught Lichee by the hand, and fled away inland, with a power and burst of speed that were almost demoniac.

CHAPTER XVII

A REPRISAL

THE flight, begun in a very mania of fear, was without goal or logic. But as I ran, sometimes jerking Lichee completely off his feet, the tragedy, whose inside workings I had been a witness to, hung before me like a painting. I saw those poor Chinamen who had been my friends and comrades huddled shockingly in unprovoked death, face down, face up, among the rocks. I saw the murderers descend warily to put the finishing touches upon the crime; to put the knife into that body which still contained, perhaps, the breath of life; and to rob the dead men of their gold.

I do not know at what point in my flight grief got the better of fear; at what point grief yielded to shame. I know that I ran slower and slower, muttering and talking to myself; and that gradually a passion of anger rose strongly from some unknown hollow of my nature, as a full river and flooded me. Then, as suddenly as I had begun flight, I broke it off; stopped short, and faced about. My im-

pulse to go back was almost as strong as that which had brought me where I stood. But the folly of so doing beat me to a standstill with swift, sharp strokes. I had the courage to go back, plenty of it, and to sell my life as dearly, as possible — but to what end? I was unarmed, and a long way from where I had left my rifle and cartridge belt. If I went back it must be to strike some terrible blow. Armed and from above I might massacre the enemy as they had massacred us; but even now they must have finished their work in the fissure, and were probably climbing out with the gold. There was no longer time to take them at that particular disadvantage. How else could I strike them? What would be their next step? Why, back to their own schooner, of course, to put the gold aboard. There were eight of them, but the gold was heavy. Neither would they feel any need to hurry. Even if they knew that I had been of the shore party, they would not disturb themselves with the thought of anything that I might do. It was that — the contempt in which I believed myself to be held — that finally goaded me into action; which, in the event of there being no more than eight all told in Carrol's party, would be as easy of accomplishment as rolling off a log. Roughly,

my plan was to get to the *Calliope* before Carrol and his men; and if, as I expected, she proved to be unguarded, to board her in one of Carrol's boats, set her on fire, and return in the same boat to the *Shantung*. That stroke, I thought, would put the enemy at the mercy of those of us who survived. But I could not risk Lichee in any such desperate business, and for a few moments more I hesitated. Then, knowing the child's natural qualities of patience and obedience, I appealed to them.

"Lichee," I said, "you sit here, no matter how long. Maybe Melican man come back; maybe Jili come; maybe Bessie. You give word Melican man you not move till some one come?"

Lichee seated himself stolidly, but with a wondering look in his eyes.

"Allight," he said.

I bent over on the impulse, and kissed his forehead.

"God keep you, little Lichee," I said, "and grow you into a fine strong man."

Then I turned and hurried off upon my errand. I knew about where the *Calliope* must be anchored; and made for that point as fast as the precaution of keeping below the sky line would permit. I kept a pretty good lookout for

Carrol's party, halting from time to time, and poking my head over some easily accessible elevation, but saw nothing of them, or theirs; until, after some twenty minutes of going, I came to the beginning of a long sweeping downward slope, and saw at the foot of it the waters of the fiord, and the *Calliope* at anchor. Two of her boats were drawn up on the shore, and a third floated under the stern; but there was no sign of a guard, nor of Carrol's returning. There might, of course, be some one below decks on the schooner herself; but that, as well as the open nature of the slope down which I must descend, were chances that had to be taken. And as the deed might hang on the turn of a moment, I flung further discretion to the winds and raced down the long incline.

The larger of the two boats had been drawn beyond high water mark and lay, bottom up, as if under repair. There were plenty of sizable stones strewn about, and with the help of these I had in a few minutes reduced her to kindling wood. Sure now that no one was aboard the *Calliope*, else the smashing of the one boat must have been heard, I managed, thanks to the strength left me by anger and excitement, to launch the other, put a couple of great stones aboard,

and after an awkward interval of rowing to lay her alongside the *Calliope*.

I opened the schooner's three hatches to give my fire a proper draft, and went below to find inflammable materials. Her hold supplied these: a barrel of tar and a great heap of straw jackets off wine bottles. I broached the tar barrel until I had a great black, sticky pool of the stuff; to this I laid a thick train, or fuse, of the straw jackets, and then, at the very moment of accomplishment, was baulked by the discovery that I had no match.

All amuck with a sudden cold sweat, I tore on deck and aft to the cabin. Here was a narrow table covered with oil cloth, and set for eight; a dish of maggoty biscuits; a platter with traces of gravy upon it; a half dozen bottles of red wine with the drawn corks replaced in their necks; yellow and filthy butts of cigarettes; and in the seat of a camp-stool (I have often wondered how it came there) a half spilled box of safety matches.

I came out of the cabin, and after one good look at the shore, which revealed no sign of life, once more descended to the hold, and set fire to my straw fuse; tended the stuff until it was burning fiercely toward the spilled tar; and then bethought me of a retreat. So

quick was the fire that smoke accompanied me to the deck. Landward all was as before, and having leaped into the boat in which I had come, and headed her round under the doomed *Calliope's* stern and split the other boat by means of the stones which I had brought, I pushed off, seated myself at the oars, and began to row down the fiord in the direction of the *Shantung*.

By now the black smoke was pouring from all three of the *Calliope's* hatches; and I could hear a loud roaring, like that of far off surf. Then the depths of those black smoke clouds began to glow; and were presently shot with tongues of furious red flame. Somehow the conflagration that I had caused made me feel very small and insignificant; the mountains beyond, with their vast, white, peaceful mantles of snow; the wide, black quiet of the fiord; the immensity and the awful gravity of nature in those regions.

I steered, by the burning schooner, without troubling to turn my head; and, owing more to the tide which was setting out than to my own exertions, made a satisfactory progress. I was thinking, I remember well, that the burning of the schooner was now a glorious thing to see; that I, an atom, had struck a

formidable blow; that Carrol and his fellow murderers must soon put in an appearance. I wondered if they would follow my retreat and pot me at long range from the island cliffs.

Then the progress of my boat stopped suddenly with a kind of soft, jerky jar, and a voice through which there ran the most hideous and shocking calm of repressed fury and cruelty pierced into my brain like a knife.

“*Good evening, Jim!*”

CHAPTER
EIGHTEEN



I RETURN
TO THE
SHANTUNG

WHY it had not occurred to me that Carrol might possibly elect to run the *Shantung's* fire and return to the *Calliope* by water, in the very boat which had been waiting to ferry us and the treasure to the *Shantung*, I shall never know. I had counted absolutely on his returning by land; and what with the burning schooner to rivet my attention, and an occasional examination of the shore, had not once turned my head to see where I was going. And now, blithering idiot that I was, I had rowed straight into my enemies' boat. Indeed, Craven, crouching in her bows, had but to reach out his hand, take my boat by the stern and make her captive. And this it was that made the effect of that soft, giving jar that I had felt.

In that moment of horror it is impossible that I should have noticed how overladen was the enemies' boat with men and treasure, and how it was only by the nicest trimming that she was kept from taking in water over one gunnel or the other. But it was to this fact

that I owed the deliberation and care which Craven was obliged to exercise in securing first my boat, and then me. The furious faces of the men in the deep-laden boat, crimson with the reflection of the burning *Calliope*, were like the faces of so many devils in a pantomime. For a moment I was paralysed, as if I had been hit across the spine, and sat looking over my shoulder into the wicked, red faces and ready, waiting hands toward which Craven was stealthily drawing me. Then, as a rat, tormented and frightened beyond endurance, turns upon a dog, I leaped to my feet, snatched an oar from the oarlock, and struck a shocking blow at Craven's face.

Unprepared as he was for a show of fight, he lurched heavily to one side and escaped the brunt of the blow; but in so doing destroyed the nice balance by which his boat was kept afloat and the water rushed strongly over her starboard gunnel. Two men rose to their feet and leapt frantically in opposite directions; and where a moment before there had been a boat filled with cruel resource and purpose, there was now but black, ice-cold water and panic-stricken men swimming desperately for their lives.

A fat hand with a diamond ring on the little

finger (and I recognised it for Carrol's) seized the gunnel of my boat; I smashed it furiously with the oar; it disappeared. Then I began to paddle desperately, first on one side, then on the other, to free myself from any further menace of that kind. But there was no need; my enemies, half paralysed by the cold and their heavy clothes, were making for the shore, with one exception. That was Craven. The blow that had missed his face had fallen heavily upon his forearm; he must have been an indifferent swimmer at best, and it was evident that without help he must drown.

Despairing of reaching the shore, he turned and swam toward me, with the most pitiful cries and entreaties. But I backed warily away from him.

"For God's sake, help me, Parrish!" he said.

"No," said I, "not for billions. If you are drowning, I'm glad of it. The sooner the better. The world will be quit of a dirty coward —"

"Parrish," he said, "don't let me —" water entered his open mouth; he strove to spit it out, became confused, and sank. A moment later his head emerged once more, the eyes rolling horribly. I could not stand this.

"Hold on tight," I said, "I'm coming."

But that attempt at mercy came near to being my last. For, whether the man was crazed by peril or malevolent to the last, he seized the gunnel of my boat in both hands, and struggled, it seemed to me, less to climb in than to overturn her.

"Look out, you'll upset her," I cried.

He only redoubled his efforts to do so. I rammed the oar frantically into his face, and saw him no more.

Had I been left with the heart to do so, I might have paddled after the enemy, and (as a cruiser with a fleet of merchantmen) dealt with them one by one. That I ought to have done so I do not for one moment doubt; I thought of doing so, and I could not. I paddled a stroke or two toward the nearest swimmer, and the oar became heavy in my hand, like the trunk of a tree; I swayed dizzily. Then suddenly that man who was third in the race, without a cry or any sudden convulsion, quietly sank.

I sat down, all dazed and sick, and while my boat drifted slowly down the fiord, watched as in a trance the leading swimmer, which was Carrol, reach the shore, and draw himself slowly out of water. Thanks to his thick de-

posit of adipose, and his strength of a brute he had not only distanced his companions by twenty yards, but had taken his rifle safe out of the catastrophe. Perceiving this I came to my senses, seized the oars once more, and rowed for dear life. There was a point of a rock, high and rounded, beyond which I should be in safety; but it was evident that before reaching it I must stand the hazard of half a dozen shots.

Carrol must have been either an indifferent marksman, or so breathed by exertion that he could not hold his rifle steadily, for the first bullet flew wide; and rather than risk a second I jumped deliberately overboard, on the opposite side of the boat from Carrol, and clinging to her with one hand, kicking with my feet, and borne by the tide, was soon in safety; and scrambling back into the boat (a gruelling bit of work) once more manned the oars, and half an hour later (it was falling very dark), exhausted and cold almost to the point of insanity, I heard Bessie's voice hailing me from the *Shantung*, and a few minutes later was alongside.

"Where 's Lichee?" she said sharply.

"I had to leave him, Bessie," I said, "but he 's in a safe place. And he promised to wait

till some one came for him. You've got to give me food and a drink, and then I'm ready."

"Thank God, the kid's safe," said she, and burst into tears.

There was an atmosphere of deep gloom aboard the *Shantung* and an ominous quiet. My story of burning the *Calliope* was received with a certain grim satisfaction; but it was easy to see that it was the intention to exact a far more terrible vengeance than that for the massacre in the fissure.

Jerry Top was the only survivor. The sight of the *Shantung* had preserved him. For so eager was he to be once more comfortably aboard and in full enjoyment of ship life, that the very moment before the fatal volley had been fired he had broken into a run, thus, by a strange fatality, dodging whatever bullets had been intended for him. Panic stricken, he had dropped his load of treasure, redoubled his pace, leapt into the water, and amphibious by nature and only emerging now and then for breath, had made his escape. But Chang, Hoang, Wu Lo, San Lo, Man Lo; those old friends and tried comrades, would not speak to us any more. Their bodies had been brought off; and Bessie drew me into the cabin where they had been laid side by side

as befitted brothers, and under one covering. I shall never forget the sight of those five yellow faces; very grave in death, but peaceful and mystic. I stood with Bessie for some time looking at them, and talking quietly about them; recalling acts of kindness and thoughtfulness; praising Chang's sea-genius to his dead face; and Hoang's bountiful strength and good nature, to his.

"Now," said Bessie, "you must go after the boy, Jim."

The hot tears were pouring down her cheeks, and down mine, too. I patted her clumsily on the shoulder and we went out of the cabin.

"One thing I don't understand, Bessie," I said, "why you let Carrol get away in the boat right under your noses."

"Why," she cried, "it was so damned sudden, Jim! We were eating dinner, and wondering when you'd all be coming back; and nobody's rifle was handy or loaded. We were n't expecting anything. And then we heard the shots and ran on deck, and could n't make out what had happened. And we stood round like a lot of dummies, jabbering and guessing — then they came with a rush, and were in the boat, and getting away, before you could say Jack Robinson; and Jerry Top was

half way out to us before we could get our guns and begin to shoot; and they shot back; and I guess there was n't much damage done on one side or the other; then they got round a corner — pretty damned quick, too, — and that was the end of that . . . Hello, what was that? ”

We stood listening with bated breath.

“ Ship—a—hoy! ” The sound came faintly from somewhere high up, or so it seemed.

“ Some one's hailing us from the cliff,” Bessie said. We joined the others who were gathered amidships, their faces turned toward the sound. Presently the hail was repeated.

“ That's Carrol,” I said. Jili exclaimed savagely.

“ Are you d-e-e-e-af? ” came the voice.

Bessie called, “ Hello there! ” at the top of her voice and then, through the megaphone that I handed her, “ what do *you* want? ”

And the voice came back with a kind of sustained, intoned effect.

“ Got a little stra-a-nger here.”

“ My God! ” I cried, “ Lichee — ”

Jili turned sharply upon me, but I could not see his face for the darkness.

“ He's in good ha-ands,” came the voice again, “ don't worry.”

"Shall I send a boat ashore for him?" Bessie called, and her voice shook.

This brought laughter out of the night, and then:

"Think it over till mo-orning."

"Lichee!" Bessie cried.

It seemed to some of us that we heard one piping note of the child's voice that was cut short as by a hand clapped upon his mouth.

"We'll ta-alk in the mo-orning," came the voice. I snatched the megaphone from Bessie's nervous hand.

"Carrol," I cried, "you'll not hurt the child." The answer came, very drawn out, and quieter."

"Not till we've ha-ad our ta-alk."

And though I called to him again and again, he wasted no more words upon us that night. Nor did sleep waste her favours upon us; the rain came down in torrents, and there was much far off thundering. Carmen, Jerry Top and I kept dismal company in the galley; now renewing the fire; now talking a little; now nodding and dozing. In the cabin Bessie kept watch with the dead, while in the fore-castle the Chinamen burned joss-sticks and prayed to the god of little children, all through the night.

CHAPTER XIX

AN EXCHANGE

THERE was never a more gray and sodden day-break; even the lively red of Jerry Top's skin, like the coals in the galley fire, had an ashen look. The piercing dampness and the unprecedented exertions, exposure and immersion of the day before had tied my muscles into rheumatic knots. I had caught a heavy cold, and my nose from being constantly blown was now sore to the touch. Of us three Carmen appeared to have come through that troubled night best; she sat erect upon a camp-stool, staring straight before her, her hands folded in her lap, her great, black stag eyes steady, brilliant and unwinking. I rose, very painfully, and one of my knees cracking like a pistol shot, she turned her eyes and smiled.

"Carmen," I said, "once and for all I'm on your side now. I want to see that man Carrol die — very slowly."

She nodded, and raising her eyebrows,
"Tea?" she said.

The word brought Jerry Top to life, so to

speak. He bounded to his feet, and had the kettle filled in no time; and I fed the fire with fresh coal and a few teaspoonfuls of kerosene. Presently the fragrant smell of tea filled the galley, and escaping thence, like a rumour, reached Bessie in the cabin, and the Chinamen in the fore-castle. Bessie was the first to join us, white and heavy-eyed; but, as always, energetic and efficient. And she spoke cheerfully, and tried to make us believe she was hungry; when, poor anxious mother, she could not even choke down a cup of tea. Then came Jili and the others, haggard from the night of prayer, and half asphyxiated by the fumes of the joss-sticks. They had no word of greeting for any one; but now and then one or other of them rolled upon me a baleful and malevolent eye; as if I alone had been to blame for our misfortunes. And I tell you it was mighty hard to bear after the long weeks of friendship and good fellowship. I had come to think that they liked me — for myself; but it was plain enough now that I was no more to them than a shaving of wood. If Lichee's mother forgave me for leaving the boy alone on the island, why not these men, no one of whom was related to him? The burning of the *Calliope*, and the drowning of two of our enemies, did

not seem to count a whit in my favour; and what with that, the suffocating cold in my head, and my aching bones, I think the dawn discovered on the whole of God's earth no man so wretched as I.

About eight o'clock Carrol hailed us from the landing place, and waving a white handkerchief at the end of a stick, asked us to send a boat ashore to bring him off to the schooner. Jili went alone; but on the chance of some further treachery, Ah Fing, who was the best shot among us, lay down against the bulwarks and steadily held a cocked rifle sighted on Carrol's bulky person. But Carrol was by way of playing fair for once, and stepping nimbly aboard the boat which Jili backed ashore to receive him, was soon alongside, much dismantled by a night of exposure, but calm, nonchalant and even tempered. As he came aboard he apologised to Bessie for his appearance; and it was only at recognising Carmen that he showed a sign of uneasiness. He bowed to her, but she looked steadily through him, as it were, and beyond; turned presently on her heel, and went back into the galley.

"Jim," said Carrol easily, "who does the talking for this crowd?"

"I guess," said Bessie, "that anything

you've got to say will be attended to, somehow. So fire away."

"Are you the mistress of this ship?" said Carrol, without, I think, meaning to play on words; but Bessie flushed angrily.

"If you've come to make a deal," she said, "stick to business."

"Oh," said Carrol, "I beg your pardon. Now how about a fire? Could n't we talk better over a fire?"

"I guess we can talk here," said Bessie.

"Just as you say," said Carrol, and he looked very much disappointed, for he was soaking wet, and blue with the cold.

"First," said Bessie, "is the boy alive, and unhurt?"

"He's cold and wet, like the rest of us," said Carrol, "but he has n't been hurt — yet."

"Come to the point, Carrol," I broke in, "we don't stand for threats in this crowd."

"Oh, yes, the point," said he, as if he had forgotten that he had come with any particular intention. "The point is we've no immediate use for the child; he knows where the treasure is, of course; but as he does n't understand a word of English . . . What are you smiling at, Jim?"

"I was smiling," I said quickly, "to think of your trying to talk Chinese."

"Well, smile," said he. "I tried all right; Chinese, English and gesticulation. But the boy's only a baby after all—and a thicker baby I never tried to enlighten. Now," said he, turning directly to Bessie, "we have n't hurt a hair of the child's head; and we propose to give him back to you safe and sound. Our differences, after all, are grown-up differences, and there's no use dragging a baby into them."

"Well," said Bessie, "you return the boy; and what must we do?"

"You," said Carrol, "must give us a grown man in exchange."

"Would a woman do?" said Bessie quickly.

"*You* bet!" said Carrol, his eyes shining.

"Then that's settled," said Bessie, "I go."

"Very well," said Carrol, "it's a bargain."

Bessie turned and made a step toward the boat; but Jili slipped in front of her, ordered her back with a savage gesture, and poured out a sudden shrill torrent of Chinese.

"Right O," said Bessie, and she turned to Carrol. "Jili says," said she, "that you wouldn't keep your word if I did go. And I think he's right. How about it?"

Carrol shrugged his shoulders.

"You've got to trust somebody," he said.

"Yes, Carrol," said I, "but I don't believe the Lord God himself could give any reason why that somebody should be you."

"Perhaps you're right," he said cheerfully, "and that being the case, why I'll have to trust *you*. Give me your word, Jim, that if I bring the boy aboard, you'll turn the woman over to me, and let us depart in peace, as the saying is." But Jili interrupted again, and with much finality.

"Bessie not go anyhow," he said, and drew back as if that was the end of that.

"Well then," said Carrol, "who will?"

"What will happen," Bessie asked, "if no one goes?"

"Why," said Carrol, "as far as I'm concerned, nothing. But there's Todd to be reckoned with, and one or two others that aren't as fond of little half-breed children as I am. They're quite a little put out by the way things have gone, and if they can't trade the boy for somebody more useful, why they're bound to have their fun with the boy. I dare say they'd be willing, and even apt, to carry their fun somewhere where you could hear it going on . . ."

Jili cut him short.

"Fetch boy, Jili go."

"Why *you?*" said Bessie.

There came a strange, tender look into the black sloe eyes, and a blush, I will swear, into the yellow cheeks.

I think that no woman has ever received a declaration under stranger circumstances. And her reception of it was characteristic and frank.

"It won't do, Jili," she said, "but thank you, and God bless you!"

"Jili," said he, quietly, "die for lilly boy, all same glad!"

"Can't you cut some of this palaver out?" said Carrol brutally. "I'm half perished. I don't care who goes; decide for yourselves; only it's got to be some one who knows where the treasure is."

"Then," said I, and I am afraid my voice faltered, "Jili won't do. It's up to me."

"Come, now," said Carrol, "decide something quick."

"What's the use of your knowing where the stuff is? You can't get away with it."

"Oh," said Carrol easily, "we'll take Jim here as a hostage, keep him safe, and in return we'll just ask you to give us and the treasure a lift to the nearest port. You all like Jim, don't you?"

"You bet *we* do," cried Bessie, in her big

hearted voice, — I think to warm my heart and give me courage. “And I’ll tell you this,” said she, “Mister Carrol, if you hurt a hair of his head — that is if he does go with you — somehow or other I’ll hunt you down, and get you in my power, and give you the finest working idea of hell that any man ever had this side of there. And you can put that in your pipe, and smoke it.”

All her colour came back for the moment, and her eyes flashed splendidly.

“Then Jim goes,” said Carrol.

“I suppose so,” said I, in a miserable, small voice.

“And you give me your word that when I bring the boy off safe and sound you’ll go with me?”

There was a moment of silence.

“Jim,” said Bessie, “if you don’t feel free to do it, don’t.”

“Free?” said I. “I admit the thought of it makes me sick . . .” I turned quickly to Carrol, lest my half-hearted resolution fail me completely.

“I give you my word,” I said hastily.

A hand clasped me strongly on the shoulder. I turned and saw Jili’s face illuminated as from within.

“Jili not forget,” said he, “not never.” He turned and motioned Carrol into the boat.

“When shall we expect you back, Carrol?” I asked.

“In about an hour,” said he, and went over the side.

“Now then, Jim, said Bessie, “you go into the fore-castle with the boys, and they’ll rub your stiff joints, and freshen you up. And, mind you, you don’t run any danger with Carrol. Your life’s pretty near as useful to them as it is to you.”

“But, Bessie,” I said, “they’ll want me to show them where the treasure is; and I’m in duty bound not to tell them; and then they’ll try to make me. It’s that that gives me the shakes to think of—if I thought they’d just knock me on the head and be done with it, all right; but I’ve got to try to stand up to them like a white man, and a gentleman, and I’m not very good at—at pain, Bessie.”

“You damned long-legged Pin-head,” said she, and her voice which she strove to make jovial and bold was very tremulous and moved. “Why in hell should n’t you tell them where the treasure is? At least have the sense and kindness to save us the trouble of sifting it all out of the sand.”

"You think it's no harm to tell them?" I cried eagerly.

"It's the only thing to do," said she positively.

The anticipation of immediate torture being done away with raised my spirits like wine; and an hour of rubbing, with whiskey, kneading and pommelling, enabled me to greet the safe return of Lichee with real joy.

Not one word had the child spoken to his captors during the whole of his captivity; but, his shrewd intellect masked by a blank and stupid expression, he had, it appears, after his first fright and surprise, even laughed at them in his sleeve. Wet, bedraggled, chilled to the bone, but calm and unperturbed, he came over the side, and ran with little solemn steps to Bessie, buried his face against her dress, and then, and then only, his pent-up feelings found their natural expression in a burst of weeping, of which he was afterward terribly ashamed.

In answer to Carrol's impatient "Are you coming, Jim, or not?" I slid over the side into the bow of the boat. Jili shoved off and headed her slowly for the shore.

Then Lichee, his face all teary still, but wreathed in smiles, ran to the bulwarks.

"Hey man!" he called.

Carrol turned his face and looked sourly at the boy.

“ Me ’peak English,” cried Lichee, “ all same Melican man!” And he stuck out his red tongue at Carrol, and jumped up and down with uncontrollable satisfaction.

CHAPTER
TWENTY



GUIDING
THE ENEMY

“WELL,” said Carrol, “that’s one or two or several on me!”

And several times during the short row he came out with a tickled chuckle. But I was too wretched and afraid to see any humour in anything; and, furthermore, the whole of my faculties were concentrated in an effort to understand what Jili was saying to me between strokes. He spoke in Chinese, very slowly, using very simple words, and I gathered at last that he was tempting me to break faith with Carrol. The matter, according to Jili, was of simple accomplishment: we must, on reaching shallow water, rise suddenly against Carrol; kill him (Jili would attend to that with his knife); and retreat covered by the *Shantung’s* rifles. But when I answered that I had given my word, and would not break it, I was rewarded by the ringing note of admiration that came into his voice; and he praised me over his shoulder; and said that I was honest as a Chinaman. Then he gave me

a piece of advice: if I found myself in imminent danger, I must throw false pride to the winds and scream at the top of my lungs; and when I seemed most deserted and alone, I must believe that help was somewhere near at hand. Also, if I had a chance to run for it, I should find the boat waiting near the landing. All that mere man could do for me, in short, Jili proposed to do. Rather than lose me, he said, he would return to China and desecrate the graves of his ancestors. And at parting he shook hands with me; but not with the cold, limp handshake that is characteristic of Chinamen; he gripped my fingers so that I felt his friendship run like an electric message up my arm, and into my faint heart.

“Well, Jim,” said Carrol, “let’s be moving. The boys are waiting up top, and they’ll be glad to see you — you’re almost the only thing so far that has come our way. Todd’s still with us — you remember Todd — a bright little feller?”

“I remember him very well,” I said.

But the steep incline of the fissure made conversation difficult; and here and there traces of blood not entirely dissolved by the rain acted on my hearing like plugs of cotton. It was a positive relief to exchange the dark sug-

gestion of the place for the cold windy heights and the suddenly met members of Carrol's party. They were waiting for us near the fissure's upper end; and Todd, stepping quickly from them with a natural and hearty "How are you, Parrish," offered me his hand. And so strong is the habit of certain practised conventions, I took it, bloody murderer's though it was.

I was in a shocking, quaking state of uneasiness to be there alone among the enemy, cut off from my friends, and with no earnest that I should live to tell the tale. Else I must have been positively amused at the droll, be-draggled figure cut by that conscienceless gang. Their dry clothes had mingled their smoke with that of the *Calliope*; the clothes they had on were still wringing wet from the night of rain and grotesquely shrunken; nor could these miserable adventurers have counted one white nose among them; coughing, snuffling, hawking, and spitting great gobs of phlegm, wiping their sore and fiery noses on their soaked handkerchiefs or wet rasping coat-sleeves, greed alone kept them yet awhile on their feet; and their rough beards, the accumulation of dirt in the corners of their eyes, their split disgusting finger-nails were in astonishing contrast to the clean shaven, sprucely groomed Chinamen I

had left behind. I noted too, and with lively satisfaction, that but two rifles had survived the upset in the fiord; and these looked for all the world as if red rust had gone into their original assemblage instead of gun metal. How I wished that my friends might suddenly appear, out of God knows where, fall upon that dejected and almost defenceless group and deliver me!

"Well," said Carrol, as if divining my thoughts, "we're richer than we look; and Jim, it's up to you to prove it."

"In what way?" I asked.

"Now," said he, "I always found you reasonable; and I hope for your own good you'll be reasonable now."

In spite of the man's wretched physical state, he chose to talk in bantering circles round and about the point.

"Now," he said, "that you and Todd and I are together again — poor Craven was so glad to get a glimpse of you the other day after all these months, but the joy was of a kind that didn't last — now, as I say, that we're together again I hope from the bottom of my soul that nothing disagreeable is going to happen —"

"Ah, cut it out!" exclaimed one of the

men, and went directly into a paroxysm of sneezing.

"Blake," said Carrol, and he thumped the fellow on the back, "see what comes of interrupting!"

"I'm sure," said Todd quietly, "that Parrish is n't going to put us to any trouble."

"Parrish," said Carrol, "is too well acquainted with the rudiments of the English language not to know how easily a man may be taught to speak it. How about it, Jim?"

"I think, Carrol," said I, "that you want me to show you where the treasure is, and that you are threatening to hurt me if I won't. Is that it?"

"Bright boy!" exclaimed Carrol.

"Well," said I, "I'm quite ready to show you where we got the gold that you took from us, and subsequently lost. If there's any more where that came from, why I suppose you can get it out as well as another."

"By the way," said Todd, "was that mule gang that we interrupted yesterday the first from the mines?"

Carrol reached into his pocket, and presently brought out the famous document that he had stolen from me in San Francisco.

"Now, Jim," said he, "go over this and pick

off the items that are already aboard the Chinese ship — so 's to give us an idea of what 's left to look for."

"It 's all to look for," I said, "so far as I know. What you lost in the fiord was all that we had lifted." And I made to return the paper.

"Keep it," said he, and with a kind of snorting laugh, "I can trust you with it — now that you 're sober. And now lead off, and show us where the stuff is."

I thrust the paper into my pocket, turned without a word and walked straight for the truncated cone in the midst of the islet. Where it was possible Carrol and Todd kept abreast of me, and the rest tailed along behind; last of all came Blake, whose cold was so heavy as to suggest incipient pneumonia. Carrol carried one of the rifles; a sour, oldish man, whose name I afterward learned was Kelsey, shouldered the other, grumbling with its weight, now stopping to endure a paroxysm of coughing, and now swearing in a hoarse, whining voice that was in ludicrous contrast to the shocking and filthy words.

Two things occupied my mind: to ascertain if possible and mark down the exact place where I had left my Winchester and my cartridge belt; and the other matter was the

weather. As a farmer during a stubborn drought I prayed fervently for rain. A little more exposure, I thought, and some of these sweet creatures will not live to tell about it. But the gray of the sky was growing thinner constantly and brighter; and north, towards Magellan, the snow capped mountains glared here and there with sudden and shifting visitations of the sun. The wind, too, had a brisk dry quality, and in my joints I felt that it was going to clear. As for the rifle, now I thought I had the place, now not. But recognising of a sudden the hollow where I had left Lichee, I was able almost at once to lay my eye on the top of the split rock, between whose halves I had laid the thing; and you may be sure that I looked backward from time to time to mark it indelibly on my mind. The last look I took was from the shadow of the cone, and I saw the extreme tip of my landmark, no bigger than a bead, black, with one sharp point of white, and shining with wet.

If my chance came it would not be upon direction that I should go wrong; for I could now, I told myself joyfully, go as straight to a weapon as that weapon's bullet could be sent back among those who might pursue.

"Carrol," said I—and he looked at me

shrewdly, for I was speaking for the first time that day in a natural voice — “ I ’ve been wondering how you happened to find Lichee — that ’s the boy — I left him well hidden; and he promised to stay hidden.”

“ Then he broke his promise, Jim,” said Carrol; “ he climbed a rock to have a look around, and Blake saw him, and the bunch of us ran him down. It was no cinch; the little devil ran like all possessed; and finally hid in a place not big enough to hold a rat; and it was pretty dark by then; and he pretty damned near got off . . . How much farther have we to go? ”

“ About fifty feet,” said I.

“ Boys,” Carrol turned and called, “ hurry up! We ’re there! ”

Even Blake, sick as he was, made shift to break into a stumbling run; and almost as one man we arrived on the rim of the treasure bowl, and stood looking down.

CHAPTER
TWENTY-
ONE



A RACE

THE excavations that we had made to get out the bar of gold were washed half full of sand; but were still amazing cavities considering with what few implements and in how short a time they had been dug. Carrol stood for a moment looking down; then jumped, landing with incredible lightness for a man of his bulk; dropped his rifle, snatched up one of the spades that we had left for our own future use, and began to dig. The rim of the bowl was fifteen feet, perhaps, higher than the level of the sand and beech bushes within; the sides were steep and smooth, with traces of horizontal grooves as if the hollow had been ground out of the virgin rock; it was, in short, an easy place to enter, and by no means so easy to leave, the smooth slopes offering but few foot-holds or hand-holds. Blake, who was the next to jump, must have twisted an ankle in landing, for he fell all of a heap, then sat up, nursed his one foot with both hands, and cursed frightfully. Kelsey, Todd and the others jumped as if from

one set of springs; and had no sooner recovered balance than they fell like dogs upon the remaining spade, struggling for its possession, wrangling and cursing each other. I have never seen men so earnest to do a piece of digging; and remarked to myself that an equal and previous zeal for hard work might have kept any one of them from becoming a rascal. At this juncture Carrol, shouting aloud, dropped his spade, and dug some object free with his hands. I could not see what it was. The others, including Blake, who hopped on his sound foot, were about him in an instant like a swarm of wasps. Their hoarse and thick voices became clear with the tonic of wild excitement; and they clapped one another on the back, and poured forth torrents of happy abuse. Then just such a frenzy of digging as had come over the *Shantung* party the day before seized them; Carrol with one spade, Kelsey with the other, a third, whose name, if I had caught it correctly, was Brandreth, with the pick, and Blake, Todd and the other with their hands. As for me, I stood forgotten upon the rim of the bowl. So far as the diggers were concerned I did not exist; nor did I (so heartily did I participate in the excitement of the digging) for a minute or two remember myself. I came

to with a start. Here was a golden opportunity such as I had been praying for; there would never come a better. With good luck I might run a mile, or even walk one, before I was missed; with the worst luck in the world I could put a hundred yards between me and pursuit. A bullet might overtake me, but the bullet that ended me would also end their chance of securing a passage on the *Shantung*; therefore they would be in no hurry to shoot, unless carried away by unthinking passion. I gave one last look at the bent, labouring backs in the bowl, took one cautious step backward, a second, a third, then turned, walked rapidly for twenty feet, and, my heart thumping furiously, broke into a run. The relief to my pent-up feelings afforded by doing something with all my might and main was incredible. So the surgeon's knife relieves the fever and agony of an abscess. My heart beat more quietly; I breathed more easily; and I am prepared to swear that I even saw a certain humour in the situation. But it was a short-lived glimpse. A furious shout to stop went through me like a bullet; then a flesh and blood bullet, or rather one of lead and lubricator, sang a wicked note in my ear. I looked back. Blake was hobbling after me, a rifle smoking

in his hands; the head and shoulders of Todd were emerging from the bowl, accompanied by a humming sound of shouts and curses.

I leaped into a hollow, and ran on; but the farther end of the hollow sloped gently back to the general level, and I must expose myself to another shot. Yet none was fired, and I looked back once more — an idiotic manœuvre which cost me a heavy fall. Still I gathered that Todd, having snatched Blake's rifle in passing, was attempting to run me down, and take me alive. And even in the brief glimpse that I had of his little lithe form running over the rocks like a mountain goat, I saw that his speed to mine was as that of a race horse to a donkey. But I had a long start; so long as he continued to gain he would not shoot; and if I could reach my rifle and cartridges, he would live just long enough to repent having chased me. All this in scrambling up from my fall, and taking once more to my heels. And I ran on, as fast as I could work my legs, and as straight for that greatly needed rifle as I could steer. The hardest part was to keep from looking back; but the last folly of that kind had taught me a lesson that was not to be forgotten. I would get to my rifle as fast as I could; that

was all that concerned me. If I got to it in time — well and good; if not — !

Soon I began to hear the light fall of Todd's feet; and presently he shouted to me to stop or he would blow my head off. But judging his distance by the sound I believed that there was still a chance. It was only a little further to the split rock; and Todd's nearness encouraged me to renewed exertions; to that labouring spurt that has won many a race at the tape itself. Yet had the luck been against me I must have been caught. I had been handicapped by one tumble; now the fates evened matters by tripping Todd. I heard the sharp clatter that his rifle made upon the rock; heard the man grunt; and twenty steps later I plunged into a hollow, turned the corner of the split rock and saw my rifle lying before me like a streak of rust. To snatch a couple of cartridges from the belt, and to shove the nose of one into the breech of the magazine was the work of an instant. But there the work came to an untimely end, for the calibre of the cartridge was greater than that of the rifle.

CHAPTER XXII

A RESCUE

THE day before when we started back with the gold, in the attendant excitement, confusion and downpour of rain, I must have picked up a cartridge belt belonging to some one else. But however the mistake had come about, come about it had; and I must pay the forfeit. Yet as Todd came suddenly upon me around the corner of the rock, I had the sense to point the empty weapon at his heart and, like a gentleman of the road, to call upon him to hold up his hands.

The effect upon Todd of finding me armed was grotesque; his jaw dropped; his eyes bulged; and he went very white; then his knees buckled, and he sat down all of a heap. To a man of very little courage the sight of the white feather displayed by an adversary is the surest and strongest impulse to daring. And a torrent of taunting phrases rushed to my lips only to fall for want of the breath to deliver them. Indeed I was so winded that now and then I saw showers of stars where Todd's face

ought to have been; and the muzzle of my rifle jerked and circled here and there. A full minute must have passed thus.

Then "Stand up," I commanded breathlessly.

Todd hesitated. He was calmer already, and the colour was flickering back into his cheeks. Then slowly, his eye never leaving mine, he rose to his feet.

"Drop that gun," I said. But his answer to this was as unexpected as it was alarming. For instead of dropping the rifle he raised it suddenly to his shoulder, cocking it as he did so, and pointed it between my eyes.

"No," he said, "you drop yours!" In my turn now there was hesitation.

"Parrish," said he, "your rifle is n't cocked. That was a sad oversight on your part, my boy. So put it down now and come along . . . My God though," he went on, "you had me scared! But when I saw that you'd forgotten to cock the thing—probably did n't know how—I felt better. Whew! Have you many more surprises up your sleeve? First you burn the *Calliope*; then you spill us overboard; then you find a rifle growing on a bush! . . . What a fellow you are! . . . It's a shame you did n't come with us in the first place, 'stead

of giving us the slip in 'Frisco, and running off with a lot of Chinamen. Why, if you'd stuck to us we'd been half way home now, treasure and all."

"So I gave you the slip, did I?" said I.

"You bet!" said he, and burst out laughing in my face.

"I often wonder," I said, "why you men weren't willing to let me go along with you, and share with you; God knows there's enough profit for all, if the invoice is anywhere near correct. Why were n't you willing?"

"Oh," said he easily, "it was for several reasons. You were n't our kind; we thought you'd be so much dead weight; and — I don't know what all. But we had one damned sensible reason — we were afraid of — of catching your trouble."

"*My* trouble!" I exclaimed.

"Yes — your lungs," he said. "We did n't like the notion of getting mixed up with your knife and fork, for instance, or drinking out of a glass that you had used; so it was voted wisest for the welfare of the many to sail without the one."

"I see," said I, and with great indignation and resentment. "And I never had a trace of consumption in my life!"

“Well,” said he, “judging from recent events, I believe you. However — if you’ve got your wind, I’ve got mine. Let’s get a move on. Pass me that rifle, butt first. We need an extra rifle. No. You can carry the cartridges. They’re heavy, I know, but in your hands I believe quite harmless.”

I reached out my hand toward the rifle, and at that instant became aware of a figure that appeared like a ghost from heaven knows where, and was creeping upon Todd from behind. It was Jili, and my sudden look of excitement nearly betrayed him; but not quite; for Todd, in the very act of turning alertly, was caught across the throat by a skinny yellow arm that sank into the soft of it like a rope; his cry was strangled ere it could be born; and it was from me that a cry of horror and fear was torn.

In the shock of the surprise, Todd’s rifle had fallen from his hands; and now struggle, writhe and twist as he would, his fate was upon him. The strong hand of Jili’s left arm never relaxed, and his right hand, holding a knife curved like a hook, now crept around Todd’s body and although Todd seized its wrist with both hands, he could not arrest its progress; just by Todd’s left hip bone the

Chinaman, with a sharp cunning jab, hooked the knife into the living flesh; worked it to the hilt; and then, sawing, jerking and dragging, began to rip his victim open.

Most horrible of all were Todd's efforts to arrest the work of the Chinaman's inexorable hand; for his jerking and tugging against that slim steel-strong yellow wrist had a look of aiding rather than hindering the ghastly work upon which it was engaged. No sound came from Todd, but a kind of whistling of the breath in his nostrils, and the sounds of his stubborn and reluctant flesh parting with rasp after rasp before the drag and jerk of the knife. Once the point of the knife screamed shrilly upon a bone.

By then I had closed with that awful group of murder, and was doing my best to pry off the Chinaman's hand. As well have grappled with the piston rod of a locomotive; the work went on to its appointed end. Then Jili released his hold, and Todd, wide open from left hip bone to right ribs, sank at our feet; quivered, choked, moaned and died.

Jili was breathless, but smiling.

"Jili think Chang larf lilly now all same dead," said he. "Jili think open belly good way; not too dam quick; not too dam slow.

Jili think time go back schooner; them mans hurt you? By and by Jili catch um other one; now go back schooner, and grind knife."

He examined with much concern a deep nick in the blade, thrust the bloody thing into its sheath, caught up the rifles; and then, one arm about my waist for I was near fainting, walked me slowly through hollows and gullies to the head of the fissure; stopping now and then to poke his head above the general level and make sure that we were not pursued; but no one actually seemed to have followed us, although Carrol could be seen half way up the side of the truncated cone, trying apparently to find out what had become of Todd and me.

By the time we reached the boat I had recovered from my faintness; but it was with the utmost repugnance only that I could bring myself to look at Jili; though his deed had saved me, perhaps, from an ultimate fate more cruel than that which had been visited upon the wretched Todd. And now with the perspective of time, that dreadful act of vivisection, awful as it was to witness, seems to have been about the compromise between sudden death and torture that such men as Todd deserve. Surely it was in no way so great a crime as the unprovoked murder of Chang and Hoang and the

others had been. Then, too, it seems that not merely the cruel passion of revenge impelled Jili to the atrocity. Rather, and Bessie explained it so to me, he wished by one terrible example to fill the hearts of our enemies with consternation and cold fear. To have found Todd conventionally dead would have served only to inflame them further against us; but to find him as he was, must, and I agreed with Bessie, serve them as an awful warning.

We had now but five men and one rifle to deal with; five men without shelter; with no food except such sea-birds (and these were plentiful enough) as they could kill; and no means of kindling a fire, for there was no fuel upon the island. Jili was for going ashore and hunting them down like so many sheep, and potting them one by one until we had accounted for the lot. But the rest of us would not hear of it; the enemy had still one rifle, and that was just one too many. Better go for a short cruise, or merely stay where we were, and let the cold and the rain hunt down the men upon the island, and dispose of them one by one.

CHAPTER
TWENTY-
THREE



THE
WHITE FLAG
AGAIN

IN the hold of the *Shantung*, each in its red-wood packing case, were twelve coffins of American manufacture, already engraved with the names of those who were some time or other expected to occupy them. Your Chinaman cannot bear the thought of being buried at sea or, permanently, in a foreign land; and, indeed, to be sure of resting one day in Chinese soil he would cheerfully curtail the full measure of his days. These coffins for which there were now occupants were hoisted to the deck, and the afternoon was passed in soldering their leaden linings hermetically over our dead, screwing down the lids, and slipping the coffins once more into the packing cases. The *Shantung's* cabin was then once more made to serve as a receiving vault, and the coffins ranged lengthwise along the wall; the centre of the cabin being kept open as usual for meals, games of cards, navigation and all its thousand and one other uses. While we were carrying

Chang's coffin into the cabin two shots were fired at us from the island; one splintered diagonally into the deck, and one flew wide. So, having stored the bodies, we got up the *Shantung's* anchor and moved her, perhaps a quarter of a mile, or as far as the width of the fiord would permit, further out from the landing; and also erected a flimsy screen of canvas that could be shifted from side to side, according to how the ship lay on the rising or falling tide, and behind which we could move about unseen. The screen, of course, offered no obstacle to a bullet; but we agreed that men with a limited supply of ammunition would not waste it on a wall of canvas, in the wild hope of hitting some one who might be at a particular point behind it. Furthermore the added distance between us and the shore precluded the idea of any desperate man swimming off to us in the night. Only Jerry Top, a native of the region, and who could bask naked in the midst of a drizzle with the mercury at 45° , for all the world like a lizard in the sun, could have accomplished so tremendous a feat of natation. Had it not been for the desperate men ashore, of whom he stood in mortal terror, he would, I think, have tried it at this time. For the man's likes and dislikes had already turned topsy turvy.

He was now as sick of ship life as formerly he had been of that on shore. And he babbled continually and very lovingly of terra firma, of moist hollows among the wet rocks, of raw sea-gulls, of occasional feasts upon the putrid blubber of stranded whale. He told us that he had a ton or more of whale buried on the island; and that if he could not come at it soon he feared that it would pass its prime. The clothes, too, that he was made to wear aboard ship fretted him cruelly. He was as sorry to remain aboard as he had been rejoiced to come.

Early the next morning Carrol presented himself on the landing, bearing a white flag; and after a somewhat heated discussion between Jili and Ah Fing, was brought off in the boat. He carried himself with commendable bravado; but it was evident that hunger pricked him, and that he was really sick with the cold in his head.

"Jim," said he to me, "that was an awful thing you did to Todd."

"Don't give me the credit of it," said I, "though I dare say it was no more than he deserved."

"So it was n't you," he said, "well, I'm glad; it was n't nice to think that a white man

had done it. I suppose you'll be surprised to hear that I've come on an errand of mercy . . . Ah! Good morning, Lichee . . . "

"Morning," said Lichee, and grinned.

"It's about Blake," said Carrol, and he seated himself heavily on the deck and leaned against the mainmast. "Excuse me—but," and he smiled ruefully, "I've been up all night with him; but we can't do anything for him. I've come to ask you in common charity to take him aboard. You've got medicines, haven't you, and whiskey? He'd have a chance here."

"What ails the man," said Bessie, "that should not ail him?"

"I suppose it's pneumonia," said Carrol. "It began with a heavy cold, and now he's delirious, and burning up with fever."

Bessie pointed to the closed door of the cabin.

"In there, Mister Carrol," she said, "are five dead men who were kinder to me than brothers. Now you ask me to take one of the men that murdered them aboard the ship, and nurse him back to health and strength? I'll tell you what we'll do for you, Mister Carrol. We'll take him aboard and we'll nurse him. If he dies—well and good; if he does n't die—if he recovers—well then, just as soon as

he's well enough and strong enough to understand what's happening, we'll hang him as high as he can be hoisted on the end of a rope. And you can put that in your pipe and smoke it!"

"Jim," said Carrol, "have you no influence among these heathen?"

"Not enough," said I, "to turn their human nature upside down, any more than my own. Those dead men in there were like brothers to me, Carrol. And I can find it in my heart to think of this Blake's plight with positive satisfaction, God forgive me."

"It's a hard world," said Carrol, "and Blake's blood is on your head, Jim, not mine."

"I guess there's damned little room left on your head for everybody else's blood, Mister Carrol," said Bessie tartly, "and now if you've said your say, I guess you'd better be moving."

He rose to his feet, staggering a little, but with a show of temper.

"All right!" he said, "all right! But answer me this — where do you all come in? Here you are, to be sure, and very snug to be sure — but the treasure's with us; and you're no nearer to it than you were before you ever heard of it. So if at any time you have any reasonable overtures just let us know."

"Carrol," said I, "we have discussed that subject already among ourselves under two heads. It was first proposed to go ashore and hunt you people down like so many quail, from rock to rock, from gully to gully, from your first hiding place to your last, and there exterminate you. But the vote went against that plan. And the present idea is to leave you severely alone."

Carrol laughed sneeringly.

"You'd better!" said he.

"To leave you severely alone," I went on, "until one by one you have gone where Blake is going, and by the same road. How long can you people hold on to your miserable lives — on that barren rock? Will the green beech stems burn, even supposing that there is a dry match left among you? How long can you eat raw gull? If the rain holds off you will die of thirst; and if the rain falls — and indeed I felt a drop not a minute ago — you are as well able to stand showers of corrosive sublimate."

He compressed his lips tightly, but still sneering.

"Jim," said he, "I don't know a bolder talker than yourself when you've got your friends to back you. But yesterday when you

were visiting us, you kept a civiler and less bloodthirsty tongue in your head!"

I crimsoned to my eyes with shame; for what the man said was perfectly true.

"But for me," said he, "it's different. And among friends or enemies you'll find me the same. When I tell you to your faces" — his face becomes gradually frenzied with rage — "that I am going to cut the heart out of every mother's son of you, I mean it. And as for the mother's daughters among you — ask that Spanish prostitute there what I did to her . . ."

"Mister Carrol," said Bessie quietly, "among Chinamen a white flag protects its bearer as surely as an army. But the amount of honour that an outcast woman can claim is so small and valueless to her, that if you don't get out of this ship in about three shakes of a lamb's tail — I'll fix you. And I'll fix you good . . ."

Her temper had risen, and she glared into the man's face, and walked slowly towards him, her arms akimbo, and her chin thrust sharply forward and up. Carrol clenched his right hand. He was brave, and no mistake. For he must have known that he had but to strike the woman to be literally torn to pieces the

next instant — and I think he meant to strike her. Jili's crooked knife was already flashing in his hand, clean once more and sharp. I sprang between Bessie and Carrol.

“Carrol,” said I, “certain things have been said to you that you may as well put in your pipe and smoke. My God, man, think of Todd!”

He must have done so, for his face changed on the instant from crimson to ash. And,

“I guess you 're right, Jim,” he said mildly.

A moment more and he had gone over the side, and was being ferried ashore.

CHAPTER XXIV

TERMS

WELL, as the saying is, we sat down to wait, and felt pretty sure of our affair. Before Carrol had stepped from the boat to the landing the rain was once more descending in torrents. You may lay it against me that I was not unduly moved with the thought of human beings succumbing inevitably to exposure, and so near at hand. But I was not. The island and its transient inhabitants seemed very far off. Do you, for instance, when you read of a terrible famine in distant India really take the matter to heart? I think not; for it is only a rare, and a very morbid, imagination that can picture sufferings beyond the seas with sufficient vividness to be troubled by them. Can you not pass a city hospital with laughter and jest? Are you in the least affected, though you fling them a thought, perhaps, by the sufferings that are going on within? You do not hear the screams, nor smell the ether, nor feel the passing of souls. If all the world's death-beds and tortures came near enough,

you yourself would die of pain. But a brick wall, the roof of a house, the width of a street, keep you in blissful ignorance. How much more, then, the width of a fiord, and the rocky heights of an island. It was harder to sit down among our own dead in the cabin, to eat a meal, than to think of Blake in his last throes. And after a meal or two that feeling of wretched discomfort passed, and I grew used to leaning against Chang's coffin and watching a deal of fan-tan eat up my resources. Have I said that I was made to gamble furiously aboard the *Shantung*? Alas it is so! And having not a penny of my own in the world I was a constant recipient of forced loans. Our stakes, it is true, were wondrous small; but the excitement was as great as among men playing for thousands. At checkers and backgammon I could hold my own; and I was beginning to see the inner workings of fan-tan; chess, however, was not a contest but a series of presents from me to the adversary; though I once pushed Lichee very close for a rubber. Bessie played cards with astonishing good luck, and very little skill; Carmen played well and unluckily; but the only heavy winners among us were poor Chang, who was dead, and Lichee. The child played with real genius; and it was

a great feather in the cap of any one who could worst him. He knew every card in the pack; at whist he seemed to know by intuition, after a lead or two, exactly what hands were held by the various players. The meanings and values of cards and their combinations were far easier to him than his own baby talk, English or Chinese. Neither did he win with the unnecessary vivacity, or lose with the dismalness of your amateur. Give the child a pack of cards and he was a Jack Hamlin. Sometimes for sport, and without stakes, he would play me a game of piquet, announcing beforehand that he intended to cheat; but, watch as I might, I could never catch him at it; and he would put back his round little face and half close his black sloe eyes, and roar at my ignorance and stupidity.

For two days and nights it rained and sleeted, and the wind howled. And we passed the time with games and cards and conversation. We even had a great candy pull, got up by Carmen for Lichee's benefit; and made a great mess in the galley boiling down molasses and pulling it till it was white, sprinkling our hands with flour so that the sticky mass should not adhere. And all this merry making was to pass the time that our enemies should take in dying.

Well, now that it's all over, that is, perhaps, a horrible thought. But even if we had sat in solemn rows twiddling our thumbs, it would not have helped in any way. And as a matter of fact while we were trying to amuse time away none of our enemies died but Blake; and his death had come upon him while Carrol was being ferried to the shore.

The morning of the third day broke overcast but rainless. During the night Jerry Top had left us, being sick to death of schooner life. But whether he swam off to the island, or to the mainland, we never knew. Probably it was to the latter, since it was nearer, and not populated by people likely to do him harm. He left the clothes with which we had supplied him lying on the deck, and departed the *Shantung* almost as naked as he had come to her. But not quite. For we found that he had taken one hair brush belonging to Bessie, Lichee's clasp knife, and a jar of strawberry jam. For my part I wish him well and hope that whenever he tires of shore life he will spy a vessel in the offing, and vice-versa.

About nine o'clock of the third day Carrol, once more waving the white flag, was seen on the landing, and on the brink of the cliffs far above him we perceived the rest of the gang,

Kelsey, Brandreth and another whose name turned out to be Swigot. These three sat upon the edge of the cliff, at a point where it was more than perpendicular, and (their legs hanging into space) resembled three small boys on a very high wall. And it seemed to me that in thus disregarding the perilous altitude they showed something of the desperation to which they must have been brought by the cold and the rain. But we kept Carrol a long time waiting, and decided at last to bring him off to the schooner only because we had been pent up so long that we were eager for diversion even of a disagreeable nature. Furthermore we thought that by a close look at Carrol, we could estimate how long the business of waiting might be expected to endure.

But it was evident at first glance that Carrol's deposits of adipose were serving him in good stead; they formed a kind of granary of reserved strength and nutrition upon which he could draw. White he was — very; thinner; and had a grave, drawn look; but his eye sparkled with intelligence and determination; and whatever his inmost estimate of the situation, he had neither the expression nor the bearing of a beaten man. He chose to present himself as the herald of the stronger party,

as indeed, he was in one way; for the treasure, now as always the real sinews of war, remained for the present on his side of the quarrel; and he chose to be sharp with us for having kept him waiting.

"If you had n't sent for me when you did," said he arrogantly, "I would have refused to treat with you at all."

"Treat with us?" said Bessie.

"And why not?" said he. "I am at this moment more times a millionaire in terms of bullion than any man in the world. I am in a position to treat with an emperor, let alone with a scrubby ship's company whose only assets are a couple of stoves and a cock-roachy schooner. Now then, I am prepared to offer you a handsome sum to land me and my friends safely in Rio, and in addition a handsome bonus for handling the treasure. I am authorised to offer virgin gold to the amount of fifty thousand dollars."

"And suppose," said I, "that we refuse this munificent offer; row quickly ashore and take possession of this treasure which by every ethical right belongs to us, and sail away, leaving you and your friends to think the matter over?"

"Jim," said he, "if you'd acted on that

idea a few days ago, instead of sitting down to starve us out, I won't deny that you could have worked it; since you outnumber us two to one, and have plenty of weapons. But you preferred apparently not to face any active or dangerous issue, and now, few and weak though we are, the game's in our hands. Don't think we spent the opportunity you gave us twiddling our thumbs. No sir! We worked like mules, and bit by bit we dug out every sliver of the treasure, and most of the gems, I guess, and we transplanted 'em, digging by day and carrying by night, until the whole mass of it lies on the cliff yonder, where the boys are sitting and dangling their legs."

"Thank you kindly," said I, "for your trouble. And it seems to me you've only saved us much time and labour."

But he shook his head gently and smiled pityingly in my face.

"The advantages of our position," he said softly, "would be obvious to any one but a nincompoop."

"Doubtless," I said, "but you will certainly have to explain them to me."

"Why, Jim," said he, "we four survivors of the late *Calliope* are in desperate straits, I admit that: we're half starved; we're chilled

to the bone; but though we've kept going on nerve and excitement we can't keep it up forever, nor indeed for very long. Perhaps you think we're good tempered about the way things have gone against us from the start? Perhaps you think we're grinning and bearing our misfortunes like the good Christians that we — are n't? No, we're feeling pretty savage and resentful, if you want the truth. If we've got to perish miserably on that damned rock, well and good; but our last death rattle is n't going to enrich anybody; because we intend, if you people won't listen to reason, to throw every grain of the treasure from the cliff into the fiord. And the waters there, as I know that have sounded them, are a hundred fathoms deep . . . Now maybe you've got a healthier view of the situation."

I must admit that the new turn in the affair threw us into a very considerable consternation. The Chinamen burst into full council, all talking at once and at the top of their lungs; and Bessie, too, mingled with them, haranguing, almost shouting, and stamping her feet.

"What are they saying, Jim," asked Carrol.

"I wish I knew," said I. "But whatever it is they'll come to a decision pretty quick."

The hubbub ceased as suddenly as it had begun, and Bessie came forward as spokesman.

"We want to know, Mister Carrol," said she, "about how much you think the stuff foots up to?"

"We've no scales on the island," said he, "so it's impossible to make any kind of an estimate; especially of the gems. But there's enough to make me and my friends feel pretty wealthy."

"Well," said Bessie, "our feeling is this: We feel that your offer of fifty thousand dollars is mighty generous; and we don't want to be outdone. So we make you just the same offer; fifty thousand dollars to be divided among the four of you, and a safe passage to Rio."

"What!" exclaimed Carrol, "why the stuff's worth millions and millions, and you offer us fifty thousand dollars' worth — when the whole of it's ours — *ours!* That for your offer!" he cried, and he spat upon the deck.

"*Mister Carrol,*" said Bessie, "we're as able to pay for our fancies as you are. You may take this offer or leave it. And you've got five minutes to make up your mind. Take it, and we'll keep our end of the contract faithfully; leave it, and by the living God, five min-

utes from now the boys go ashore and hunt down those friends of yours from their perch. If they chuck the treasure overboard, well and good, they 've got sand. But I think Mister Carrol they 'll run like whipped sheep! Jili — Ho Lee — get your guns out, boys, and get a bead on those black birds on the cliff yonder!”

The Chinamen sprang to the work, and poking their rifles here and there through the canvas screen that had been rigged to keep our actions hidden, prepared to make it hot for the men on the cliff, who, in utter ignorance of what was brewing, continued to kick their legs idly in space.

Carrol sprang to his feet livid.

“Is this how you respect a flag of truce,” he cried. “My God strike me dead! There’s no decency left among men.”

“Mister Carrol,” cried Bessie, “the flag affects only you. Nobody’s raising a hand against *you*! As for those skunks up yonder there’s nothing to protect them — except the long range — four — five — six hundred yards *I* call it — and that won’t cover them long.”

“It’s murder!” Carrol screamed this at the top of his voice, hoping, I think, to warn his friends; but if his cry did reach them it passed unheeded.

"Try that again," said Bessie, "and we'll call the truce off — and you'll last about five seconds . . . now then, my buck, take our proposition or leave it."

"But I can't," said Carrol resolutely, "without consulting with my friends, I'm only one vote among four."

"Oh well," said Bessie, "if that's all the influence you've got up yonder, and you the boss, the fount of wisdom, I guess we better open fire and have done with the business." She turned to the Chinamen.

"Jili," she said —

"Hold on!" said Carrol. "You guarantee us fifty thousand and a safe passage to Rio?"

"Fifty thousand," said Bessie, "and a safe passage — unless you try any dirty work!"

Carrol's face was a study. Resolute villain, I think he was capable of flinging the offer in our faces and dying a martyr to his own stubbornness. But it must be that at this moment the inklings of some future desperate plan came to him; for suddenly, and with considerable meekness, "I accept," said he, "for myself and for my friends."

"Well *and* good!" said Bessie.

"And now," said he, "put me ashore, and I'll tell the boys."

For answer Bessie fetched the megaphone and thrust it into his hands.

“From the moment you accepted the proposition,” said she, “we’re responsible for your safe passage to Rio, and we’re not going to let you run the risk of going ashore. Now then, ’phone those men that you’ve made a satisfactory arrangement — you needn’t state the terms — or you might get yourself permaturely disliked. Tell them to come at once to the landing, and we’ll send for them. And by the way, they’ve got a rifle. Tell them to throw that into the fiord — so that I can see them do it.”

Carrol rolled a wicked and baleful eye; but he put the megaphone presently to his mouth, and gave his comrades their directions. For a few moments they appeared to consult; then — Kelsey, it was, rose to his feet, raised the rifle high above his head, held it thus in full view for a second or two, and flung it from him. It seemed a long time falling, turned over slowly, and entered the water without a sound or splash that could be detected from the schooner. The three men then turned and disappeared, making for the head of the fissure that conducted to the landing.

“Well,” said Carrol, shrugging his broad,

fat shoulders, "that's over. Now for God's sake give me something to eat and a drink, and let me dry out at the stove."

"Jili," said Bessie, "look after Mr. Carrol."

The way in which Jili did this must have astonished that desperate adventurer. Jili drove into the man's brawny legs and jerked them from under him, and pitched him heavily upon the deck. Then, falling upon him with ropes, Ah Fing and Ho Lee had in a moment so bound him that he could move no more than his fingers and toes.

"Look in his hip pocket," said Bessie. "I thought so! A sawed off Colt. Take the cartridges out of it, and give it to Lichee to play with. Take that knife, too, that he wears in his belt; he sports that so open that I guess he's got another hidden. Find it."

It was as Bessie said. The man had a second knife in reserve. And his face became apoplectic with fury when this last resource was taken from him. Foam appeared on his lips and, rolling his head until he could see Bessie, "Damn your soul to hell!" he cried, "you blank, you blank, you blank!"

"Jili, said Bessie, "if that sewer of a mouth starts to run again, get your sail-needle and take a couple of stitches in it."

"Carrol," I said, "I've enough humanity in me to advise you to be careful. You've spoken as a man has no right to speak to a woman were she Satan's mother. Try it again, and your lips will be sewed together like the lips of a wound; the stitches to be taken out at meal time. Behave yourself, and you will be treated reasonably well."

He made no answer at all; and presently was carried into the galley, placed near the stove to dry, and fed by hand like a baby.

Not long afterward Kelsey, Brandreth and Swigot came over the side; and three more forlorn, meek, spiritless sheep I have never had the pleasure to see. And they took to the idea of being bound with ropes as peacefully as tired men take to soft beds at the close of the long day.

Two small penknives, one vicious clasp knife and a revolver whose mainspring turned out to be broken, were found about them; and in Kelsey's watch pocket a small bottle labelled *Spirits of Lavender*. Bessie was about to heave this overboard, but Carmen begged for it, saying that it was a well-known and harmless remedy for insomnia, and that she stood in great need of something of the kind. I think she spoke in good faith.

“ But,” said Bessie, “ how do you know it ’s what the label says? ”

Carmen uncorked the bottle and sniffed at the contents. Then smiled suddenly into one of her rare and animated smiles.

“ You tell by thata smell,” said she. And she recorked the bottle and thrust it into her bosom. “ It ’s my hands,” she said, nodding brightly, “ they keepa me awake. They have a what you call him? ”

“ Rheumatism? ” I suggested, and she nodded.

“ It ’s this cold, damp climate,” I said, “ you poor soul.”

“ Yes,” she said, “ here it is too fraish for my poor bone.”

CHAPTER XXV

CARMEN GIVES ADVICE

How often during the next days of appalling labour for all hands did I envy Carrol, Kelsey, Brandreth and Swigot, in comfortable bondage, each with a pillow to his head, reclining in the warm galley and resting from wickedness! Standing and contemplating the great mass of treasure on the cliff for the first time was, I think, the most delightful and thrilling occupation upon which I was ever engaged; and I could have spent a month turning over the pieces, admiring this admirable golden bowl, battered as it was; or piecing together the ancient Peruvian wainscotting, and laying it in order (like the parts of a picture puzzle) upon some level space of sand; or I could have looked by the hour into the heart of one ice green emerald, and by the hour into the heart of the next. Or I could turn away from the glistening, tarnished heap, losing my vision in the distances of the snow-capped mountains and flying hand in hand with the imagination

to the active centres of civilisation; there to see myself play the nabob, the philanthropist, the friend of the poor; my yacht should be white and tall upon the blue waters of Long Island sound; my house should stand wherever skies are bluest, and nature is most grateful to the helping hand. I imagined in terms of hundred acre lawns and marble stables. Or better, and less personally, I dreamed that I should do something noble with my money, of great good to the many, enduring and free from taint; though just what that should be I was admittedly unable to specify. In short, like every other natural man in this world, I wanted the pleasure and the ease and the picturesqueness of great wealth, without any of the labour. I wanted to sit upon the cliff and play with the museum pieces of the treasure, and guess the value they would bring in the market. But after one hour of it exactly, I did not want to be one of the pack mules that must carry the stuff like so much coal, and help store it aboard the *Shantung*. Do you know that sixty pounds of gold is no easier to carry than sixty pounds of offal, and is heavier upon the shoulders of a man than the whole of his sins? But such is the fact. And when you get under your load for the twentieth time in

one day, and the straps of your panier settle themselves into the raw furrows on your shoulders, and when after a heavy stumble the sixty pounds hits you a concentrated jarring bump upon the spine, then, indeed, you begin to understand the woes of the rich. And the woes of the rich are just as woful as the woes of the man who dynamites them. And this, having moved upon my own shoulders about a ton of bullion in two days' time, I myself am prepared to certify, laying, if requested, my right hand truthfully upon The Book.

When at last it came to moving the silver — and this was of problematical value owing to the depths to which it was bitten by tarnish and destroyed, I struck work. Cold as was the wind and the drizzle, I stripped off my coat and shirt, and instructed Jili (who, ever since I had gone as an exchange for Lichee, had been very tender with me and thoughtful of my comfort) as a committee of one to examine my shoulders. He reported them unfit for work, and though at a pinch I might have carried one more load. (consisting of nothing less valuable than Koh-i-nurs I was invalided to do guard duty over our four precious rascals in the galley. Hitherto I had only taken my turn at this; but for the whole of the last day

during which we lay anchored in the fiord, I kept the necessary eye on them, and played the bugbear generally.

The four, now well-fed and warmed, began to take life very easily, and to joke with their jailors; but that the least opportunity would fill them once more with the old Nick was not to be doubted. During that last day, for instance, Carrol proposed, if I would set them free and arm them, to make me sole master of three parts of the treasure. To murder the Chinamen was the merest detail of the plan; and, although he opened the matter jocosely, I could see that he was not altogether sure as to whether I was to be tempted or not. Having heard him out to the end, however, I laughed in his face, and he laughed back.

“ You treated me so faithfully and honourably in Frisco,” said I, “ that I feel sure you would do the same now if I set you free. All you have to do is to give your word, to be believed by any one aboard this ship. Why, man, I don’t believe, I honestly don’t, that you ever so much as kept a promise given by yourself — to yourself. Suppose that yours had been the successful party, how many of them would you have allowed to survive to tell the tale? And I ’ll give you others a piece of mighty good

advice. It's this — when you go ashore at Rio with your share of the fifty thousand that's to be handed over to you, keep an eye on Carrol here. He'll want the whole of it, and he'll get it — if you don't watch out."

"Parrish don't think much of you, do 'e?" said Kelsey. "And I dunno's I blame 'im."

"It's a long rolling road to Rio," said Brandreth cheerfully, "and between here and there the ocean's deep, and maybe we'll all roll on the bottom together."

"I dreamt last night," said Swigot, "that the damned ship blew up, and while I was in the air the ropes that bound me bursts asunder, and I fell flop into the water, and was just striking out for shore when I gets all tangled up in the Chinks' pig-tails and is dragged under."

"On the level, Jim," said Carrol, "what do you think the treasure's worth?"

"Well," said I, "I toted the smallest share of anybody from the cliff to the boat. And I calculated roughly that that share was about twenty-eight hundred pounds gold — that's more than a million dollars, just what I carried alone. Some of the boys made as many trips as I did and carried about a hundred pounds each time to my sixty. Then there are the

emeralds and things, and the good Lord only knows what *they're* worth!"

"When I was in the land of the free," said Kelsey pathetically, "emeralds was high."

And thus we argued the matter, and estimated. Just as in a café four men may sit about a table and guess by the hour as to the fortune of Mr. Vanderbilt or Mr. Rockefeller; starting upon guessed premises, and arriving, of course, nowhere. It was wonderful to see how cheerful a topic to these four men was that of the millions that they had all but secured for themselves. So every family loves to dwell upon the gold mine that should have made it rich; or upon the timber lands sold at the wrong time, by the unprophetic grandfather. And so, I fancy, the civilised world over, the most toothsome of all gossip where men are met together is that of unboundable wealth. And if it were not for heavy gold, light women, and fast horses, civilised man would soon lose the use of his tongue.

A figure blocked the galley door, and a shadow fell among us conversing. Carmen was on her rounds. Fifty times a day she would thus steal silently upon the prisoners, stand a while in the frame of the door, look her fill upon Carrol in his fallen fortunes, and

steal as quietly away. But on this occasion she spoke.

"It is better," she said, "that fat man be killed before he do mischief. You think he mind them rope? Not so much." And she snapped her distorted little fingers. "You keep faith with heem, but nobody keep faith with me. When I say I come along, and not want any gol' you promise me that man for myself. Now you not give heem me. But I tell you I creep in here some fine night, when nobody on the look, and then I have my little fling with heem."

She gazed for a long time into Carrol's face, and he went white under the stare of her great accusing stag eyes.

"If I not kill heem," she said, "that ver' bad. When he break loose, and cut your heart out, you not like hear me say, 'I tole you so.' That man poison, just lak snake. He wear thata rope 'cause it suit heem; but he not have to."

She turned and went as suddenly and as silently as she had come; but her words had blunted the edge of cheerful conversation. And Carrol in particular was badly scared by them.

"I tell you," he said, "I don't like it. I

was promised a safe passage to Rio, and I submitted to be bound. I demand either that these ropes come off, or that I be guarded night and day. I tell you it gives me the chills to think of that revengeful slut creeping in here some night and cutting my throat."

"You may be quite sure," said I, "that anything of that kind will be prevented."

"Quite sure's not sure enough," said he.

"Well," said I, "it's the nearest sure you can be in this world."

"And to think," said he, in the tone of one who has missed the short end of a hundred to one shot at the races, "that I could have killed her, one time in Lima, just as well as not, could have had the business hushed up, and never need have had this hanging over me. I tell you it's damned unpleasant, not to put it stronger."

The next day dawned with watery sunshine and capricious breezes. We got up the *Shantung's* anchor, and stood down the fiord for the more open stretches of Beagle Channel, and about ten o'clock had left the scenes of our desperate adventures behind. Looking astern the great white blotches of the headland dwindled, and ran together until they resembled once more a saucy schooner under

full sail; and dwindled and shrank to a spot, to a pinhead, and vanished at last from our eyes forever.

Of the various emotions displayed at this time Bessie's was the most odd. For she was moved suddenly to tears, and clasped Lichee to her heart, and fondled him, and finally pushed him away from her, and ran into the cabin, and sat for many hours among the coffins of the dead.

CHAPTER XXVI

AT SEA AGAIN

To run out of Beagle Channel, turn the corner, so to speak, and follow up the eastern coast of South America, embraced but the first principles of navigation; eliminating a perilous re-passage of Magellan, or the dangerous gales and seas of Cape Horn. We were now so rich that it mattered little in what port of the civilised world we should first anchor; let it be only the nearest and easiest to reach, and one from which trustworthy steamers sailed, or trains ran. But the troubles which such a course promised to prevent were inflicted upon us in other ways. Our venture was predestined to trouble; where navigation should have been easy it was made difficult by fog. And in comparison to Chang, Jili was no great sailor; instead of incurring dangers on the side of boldness, he incurred them by caution and procrastination. And instead of feeling his way northward through the fog, he stood day after day straight out to sea; we weathered a very wicked fifty-hour gale that never so much as lifted a corner of the fog; we came

within an ace of running down an uncharted island; and we sprang a leak forward, which, though not an actual menace, obliged us to keep the pumps pretty active. And when at last fine blue sea-weather put in a tardy appearance, and our minds were at rest as to the ship's position, Nature, not yet ready to let us go scot free, visited us with the scurvy. Labour that was almost unendurable, and long continuance in a narrow, salty and not particularly nutritious diet, had its usual results; especially the labour. For those who had worked the hardest were the first to fall sick; while those who had not worked at all escaped. The passengers or prisoners continued in excellent health and spirits, with the exception of Carrol; and whatever it was that ailed him it was not the scurvy; he seemed to suffer more from general langour and loss of appetite than from anything specific; and complained that his whole skeleton was outlined in aches. The women had no touch of the scurvy, nor had Lichee; and my own case of it was more in the nature of a threat than a development. But the Chinamen, for what reason I do not know, unless it was that they had endured such cruel labours, displayed no power whatever to resist the disease. Irregu-

lar red blotches splotched their emaciated yellow faces; their bones ached, their gums bled; depression, exhaustion and a disgust of themselves marked them. They were paying an awful price for riches. It seemed positively wicked not to put the well men to work; but it was a risk that we dared not run; for the Chinamen, though they continued dejectedly to sail the *Shantung*, were in no condition, immensely superior though they were numerically, to handle a spirited mutiny with any certainty. So obvious was this that Kelsey, Brandreth and Swigot begged like so many children to be freed from their bonds and put to work. A dozen times a day they volunteered for work, their eyes gleaming and glistening; but when denied, it was really comical to see how ill they bore the disappointment.

One thing was certain. We must crack on all sail and make for the nearest fresh vegetables. And to that intent we hauled our wind and steered for Port Pazoo in the Gulf of San Matias. None of us had ever heard of the place; it was not sure we should find there what we sought; and, as the saying is, we were merely taking a chance on it. It was the nearest named settlement that our chart gave, and the wind blowing strongly, and with every ap-

pearance of steadiness from the southeast, had not a little to do with the decision.

Shortly after we had made our landfall, Ah Fing died, and was sealed in his coffin, and laid by the side of his friends and comrades who had gone before. But in spite of this sad ending to a cheerful, useful and laborious life, the effect of sighting land could not but cheer us to the marrow. It looked a green, fertile country; and it served like some potent drug to arrest the course of the scurvy. Else must Ah Fing's death have been followed by others; for very sick men are often like sheep about dying. Together they hold out for awhile; then one takes the plunge and the others make haste to follow.

Of all our ship's company Carrol alone was not cheered and revived by the sight of land; for two days he had refused food; and he had all the appearance of a very sick man. Perhaps he realised that any desperate plan he may have formed of rising and taking the schooner at sea was over and that his game was up. He spoke, if at all, very quietly and soberly; he seemed to think there was a possibility of his dying; and he was so meek as to express regret for the life he had led and the deeds he had done. *If* he died, he said, he

wished his share of the fifty thousand to go to a charity which he named in Los Angeles; a charity, he said, that his own mother, rest her soul! had founded. I think that in all the seven seas you could not have lighted on a more Christian spoken man. In the expression of his face, calm, gentle and tolerant and in the quiet, colourless words of his mouth, with the occasional quaint sanctimonious turns, he was the most vivid illustration, nay illumination, of that ancient saw:

“ When the devil is sick
The devil a saint would be;
When the devil is well
The devil a saint is he.”

A pleasant human note, coming as it did from so evil a man, was the pathetic concern exhibited by Kelsey for his fallen leader; and Brandreth and Swigot seemed to have a real tenderness and affection for him. Yet God alone knows what he may ever have done to deserve it at their hands or another's.

We came at last to anchor off the umbrageous, little red-roofed settlement called Port Pazoo, and learned within the next twenty minutes in the person of Don Phillip Emanuel Esquada, that the diminutive place maintained a customs and a quarantine.

CHAPTER
TWENTY-
SEVEN



DON PHILLIP
EMANUEL
ESQUADA

THERE was nothing Spanish about the little man but his name. For he was a Vermonter by birth as he made haste to explain; and a dentist by education. He had taken a Spanish name the quicker to advance politically; and had assumed all the prerogatives of a bona fide physician, a profession more lucrative in Port Pazoo than dentistry. The little creature had bright eyes, a dancing step and a prodigious moustache. He was a veritable wind-bag for loquacity; and yet a man that rang kind and honest; especially, I think, to so poor a judge of physiognomy as myself.

“You ’ve got sick aboard?” said he, in his quick chirping voice of a dickie bird. “What ails them — scurvy? *I* see; dose ’em all round, and send you out a boat-load of salad. Any other sick? One case. Don’t know what it is — eh? Mysterious — *I* see. I’ll have a look at him.”

“We ’re obliged to keep him in confinement, doctor,” said I.

“Mutinous — something of that sort?” — he interrupted. “*I* see . . . ”

“Well not that exactly,” and I was for giving a certain truthful, if not complete, account of the situation, but Don Phillip had not been born with the faculty of listening — at least to me.

“*I* see — *I* see,” he said. “Now where is he? . . . pretty woman that . . . your wife? . . . mistress? . . . ”

“No,” I shouted, “nothing of the kind!”

“*I* see — *I* see,” he said, “pretty — plump — affectionate — good-natured — big eyes. Now about this mutineer . . . In the galley — eh? . . . Have the goodness to point him out.”

Carrol had rolled over on his face and was moaning and breathing very heavily.

“Looks like stomach-ache — roll over, my man — glary eyes — just put out your tongue — phew! White as chalk — pulse — hum — hum — regular enough at the moment — but weak — very weak. How long have you been feeling bad . . . Any fever — that ’s bad . . . ever been like this before . . . plenty of fat left . . . damned if I know what ’s the matter with you, my man.”

“Water!” moaned Carrol.

“I stepped out of the galley to fetch him a

dipper full and when I returned the doctor was kneeling beside him, and pressing his ear to him here and there as if to listen to the workings of his heart and lungs. But in those few moments a change had come over both Carrol and the doctor. The doctor's loquacity had left him; and Carrol had in each cheek a spot of colour.

"Here's the water," said I, "and by the Lord Harry, doctor, your man looks better already."

"Better!" said the doctor, "not much — he's not better. Look here . . ." He rose from his knees and whispered in my ear:

"It's incipient yellow fever, I'm afraid." The little man's voice shook. "It has n't reached the virulent contagious stage — but it's on the verge. Did you see his tongue? Now you must see what arrangements can be made to quarantine him from the others."

"We must put him ashore," I said.

"Not much, you must n't," said he. "What do we keep a quarantine for?"

"But," said I, "I have never heard of yellow fever coming on this way — and hanging off so long. Why the man's been complaining for weeks."

"There are twenty forms of yellow fever,"

said the doctor. This is one of them . . . And by the way, if you 'll muster the crew, I 'll — " He seemed unaccountably agitated, and I attributed this to his personal fear of taking the fever from Carrol. " I 'll," he said, " I 'll dose — them — all around. Tell them to go into the forecandle and lie down in their bunks; I 've some strong specific here, and it 's best to rest after taking it."

It was n't very difficult to persuade the Chinamen to lie down; they were very tired, poor fellows, sick and listless. Jili especially looked to be at death's door. They drank a tumbler apiece of the medicine the doctor had mixed for them; made no complaint of its taste, which he said they would find bitter and disagreeable; and one and all turned their faces to the wall and lay like dead men.

" Now boys," said the doctor, " that medicine will begin to burn presently — but don't mind — that only shows it 's working . . . Now, Mr. Parrish, I 've mixed a glass for you, too."

" No, no," I said, " a little fresh salad will fix me. There 's not anything really the matter with me."

Jili turned his face toward us, attempted to smile and rubbing his abdomen with one hand,

"Him burn all same fire," he said.

"That's right — that's right," said the doctor. "The more it burns now the quicker it will stop burning." He seemed unduly agitated and in a great hurry to get on deck into the open air.

"It's too close for me," he said, "down here."

I followed him up the ladder. Bessie, holding Lichee by one hand, was waiting for us.

"Have you given them some medicine, doctor?" she asked.

"Yes — yes," he said hastily, "but I must ask you to make that child scarce. You've a case of yellow fever aboard — the man Carrol — better go into the cabin until we've made arrangements for disinfection, and so forth. Excuse me, Mr. Parrish, I must send my boat ashore for a supply of vegetables."

He gave an order to the men who had rowed him out, and they cast loose and pushed away toward the landing.

"Now then," said the doctor, "I'll have another look at Carrol."

This time I did not accompany him into the galley, but stood idly looking at the distant town, longing to stroll about its shady streets,

and to eat myself sick with its fresh fruits. Presently I heard what sounded like a groan. I turned, and saw the face of Jili half out of the forecastle hatchway. His chin was turned forward and up; and his eyes were frightfully rolling; a steady humming sound of moaning and groaning seemed to pass him, coming from the forecastle, and spreading into the open air. Jili's thin hands clutched the edge of the hatchway, and he seemed to be making semi-conscious efforts to drag himself upon the deck. Then, as I looked, his head rolled further and further back, his hands relaxed their hold, and he fell suddenly out of sight.

I sprang into the galley to call the doctor. But before I could speak his name I was thrown violently to the floor, beaten about the head, and bound hand and foot, and chucked into a corner.

Carrol stood over me, smiling.

"Wonderful man, the doctor," he said. "Cures me, puts the Chinks out of their pain, and now look at him!" I heard the sounds that accompany sea-sickness, and turning my head saw the little doctor bending over double and convulsed by nausea.

"Luckily," said Carrol, "he kept his nerve until he'd done the trick . . . Brandreth, go

and batten down the forecastle hatch; the Chinks ought to be quiet enough by now, but you never can tell. Swigot, you and Kelsey take some of these rope ends and make the women fast. As for me . . . my God I *eat* . . . Jim — Jim,” he said, “it takes a nerve to starve yourself sick . . . ” He burst out laughing. “And you thought I had the yellow fever, did you? . . . Buck up there, doctor. You played your part to perfection. I give you a mark of ten, as the boys say.”

All this while he was ransacking the galley for food, and cramming such as he found into his ravenous mouth.

“And so, Jim,” said he, “you would n’t take your medicine like a man? You were so damned fond of those yellow friends of yours that I thought you’d like to go with them *wherever* they’ve gone.”

“Was it poison you gave them?” I faltered.

“*Was* it poison — !” and he slapped his thighs as if an excellent joke had been passed — “and what would we give them — *soothing* syrup?”

“God,” I moaned, and then I am afraid I cried a little, what between horror and fear. For I could not but think that my own end was near at hand. And almost I wished that

I had drunk of the poison lest a worse fate befall.

Presently Kelsey poked his head in at the door.

"Kelsey, sir," said he, "to report that the ladies has been secured."

"Ah," said Carrol, "and they sent me their love, I calculate."

"Well not Bess, sir," said Kelsey. "But little Spanish, she said to say as how she was always all yours."

"Well," said Carrol, "since all's ship-shape, I guess we better get up the hook and make sail. Cheer up, doctor — there's a million of gold belonging to you on this ship, and that ought to be heavy enough to keep food on your stomach. Jim —" he turned at the door, "don't look so silly — you'll be well treated — you'll even have those ropes taken off when we are out of sight of land."

An hour later the *Shantung* was standing once more for open sea. Carrol came into the galley and cut the ropes which bound me.

"You're wanted on deck," said he.

"Why?" said I.

"To help throw the dead overboard," said he. "The forecabin's all cluttered up with them, and so's the cabin."

“Bessie!” I half asked.

“Still showing fight,” said he. “My God, man, you’re not in love with the woman, are you? Because if you are—well, damned if I don’t begin to feel sorry for you.”

“When are you going to finish with me?” I asked.

“Why, this is my plan,” he said in a confidential tone, “and you’ll agree it’s a good one. We’re going to lay a course for Rio, and some time between now and landfall we shall expect you to make yourself scarce. That’s all. God knows, I’ve enough murders on my conscience to last me, and I don’t want another. So, Jim, any time you don’t like your company you can either get a prescription from the doctor or — jump.”

“Thank you,” I said.

“And meanwhile,” said he, “you will be free day times to go and come as you like; to eat with us, and to steep your sense of the picturesque in such bacchanalian scenes as are liable to occur from time to time. Boys will be boys!” said he. “And now let us bury the dead!”

CHAPTER XXVIII

WAITING

SINCE I was allowed to come and go as I pleased, I passed the rest of the day with the women and Lichee in the cabin. They were no longer bound, but had been forbidden the deck under pain of death; it being the intention, I suppose, to reduce them to quiet submission, by this and other bullying methods. And woful as was my own prospective fate, I am happy to think that at this time my thoughts were mostly for them. I was to die, before very long, by my own hand, according to Carrol's calculations; but Bessie and Carmen were to furnish sport, before their necks were wrung for them; and dreadful as that thought must have been to them, yet I think it was more dreadful to me. And I was resolved that when the time came, when the first violence was offered to one or the other, I should choose that moment for my enforced act of suicide. But it should not be a meek and sheepish finale. Man of peace that I was, I was determined to go war-

likely out of the world, with blood upon my hands.

"I tell you," said Carmen, "for to kill that man long time ago. You not do it, an' now I say 'I tol' you so.'"

"We were fools," I said.

"An' now what become of us woman, I ask?"

"Now look here," said Bessie, her face haggard and white with grief, but the lustre and shining quality of her eyes undimmed, "one thing at a time. We're not threatened at the moment, and won't be as long as this wind holds. For God's sake let's have no post mortems, or ante mortems. Let's either get together and think a way out, or let's pass these last hours cheerfully."

"I think sometimes," said Carmen, "I run out and jump into the water."

"I think of that, too," said Bessie. "But so long as they don't hurt Lichee I'm going to hold on to life as hard as I can — no matter what happens. What difference does it make? I'm low enough by all human rules; and I'm ready to step lower — yes smiling, damn it — if only there's an off chance that they'll sicken of me, and not hurt the boy and put us ashore somewhere."

"There's no chance they do that," said

Carmen, "not me. They let us go, we tell on them pretty quick. They not let *that* happen."

"No," said Bessie, "it's just a pipe dream—but my little boy . . . he can't hurt them . . . he can't bear witness against them . . . he could n't, could he, Jim?"

"Not legally," I said. "But don't you worry about him, Bessie—we're full grown and can stand anything, and must, I dare say; but there must be a white spot in every man; and I believe that Carrol's got a speck of a one. Honestly I think he won't hurt the boy."

The cabin floor was strongly pitched to port, owing to the deep keeling of the *Shantung*. Its angle was as a barometer of danger or safety. Let it but keep its pitch indefinitely, and the women were indefinitely safe; for our captors would need every man among them to sail the ship; but let the wind fall, and the cabin floor swing back to the level; then, I made sure, other matters would at once occupy their minds. But all that afternoon of waiting and thinking out desperate and futile stratagems, the boards maintained their sharp slant, only varying it with the pitch and roll of the vessel; but toward sundown the general angle began sensibly to diminish, and it was evident that the wind had begun to fall.

"Wind's falling, Jim," said Bessie.

"Yes, Bessie," I said.

"Well — " she controlled her voice with some difficulty — "dear old Jim, we've been good pals. You've liked me in spite of the black marks, and I've liked you, Gawd knows how much."

Carmen rose, walked to the cabin port, and stood looking out upon the sea; in a corner, that same occupied by Chang in his coffin, Lichee lay sleeping and curled into a ball.

"Jim," said Bessie, "we've all got to die some time — and the thing I mind most about what's going to happen to me is — oh well — that you should be alive to know about it."

"Bessie," I said, "Bessie dear — I'm a weakling, God knows — but if that's all that's worrying you! The first hand that is laid on you, is the signal I'm waiting for. I step out of the world then, Bess — but not alone, I hope. Having lived so long without my just share of strength and manliness, it may be that at the last the Lord will make me strong for a minute or two. I have been thinking about it hard all day — how best to go at it, and all that — and I think that if I'm very quick and very sudden, maybe I can get my thumbs into Carrol's eyes and kill him, before the rest can

brush me off. Any way that is how I shall try to — to enter my final protest — that is, unless I can snatch a weapon from one of them.”

“Jim,” said she, “would you rather I died fighting — or is it really nothing to you one way or the other?”

“Bessie,” I said, and I took her hand in mine, “it ’s so much to me that almost I think I would. But if your boy is to be let off at last — why then, my dear — then I think you must n’t die.”

She bowed her head gravely. Then caught my hand to her lips and kissed it.

“Gawd help us all,” said she.

CHAPTER XXIX

SPIRITS OF LAVENDER

WITH the falling of night there came a dead calm. Lichee still slept in his corner; while Bessie and Carmen and I sat in silence and waited. It grew darker and darker, but still our captors gave no sign. At last, however, we heard steps upon the deck without, and presently the cabin door was thrust sharply ajar, and Carrol, carrying a lanthorn, appeared in the opening.

“What,” said he, “no lights? Tactful but cheerless. Well, my hearties, how goes it?”

He strode in, and having thrust the lanthorn almost into our white faces, and laughed, he stood it with a clatter upon the table.

“Now then,” said he, “light up and set the table. We’ve had a hard day of it, and we’re going to have a bangup dinner and pass the time with laughter and song. How’s the ship fixed for drinkables?”

“There’s water,” said Bessie, “and whiskey and red wine — Spanish Red —”

“Spanish Red!” exclaimed Carrol, smacking his lips. “Where is it?”

"In the wine locker," said Bessie, "under the lower berth in the port storeroom. In there," and she nodded in the direction of the closed door. "Here's the key." She unslung it from her neck and held it out to him.

"You know where the stuff is," said Carrol, "I appoint you cup-bearer. Put out a dozen bottles."

Bessie flung the key on the floor.

"Now, my dearest dear," said Carrol, "don't be a fool."

Carmen leaned over suddenly and picked up the key.

"I get him," she said.

"That's right!" said Carrol heartily, "there's a sensible girl. She knows which side her bread's buttered," and he turned on his heel and strolled out.

Bessie turned coldly to Carmen.

"After all your hotstuff talk about what you'd do to Carrol — you're a pretty weak sister, I must say."

But Carmen smiled — almost laughed. And she bent down and whispered so that both Bessie and I could hear.

"There is one chance," she said, "only laugh — an' be gay, an' set that table."

"A chance!" I exclaimed.

"Better I not say a thing," said Carmen. "But look—I smile—almos' I am happy; I ask you, if you hopes for paradise, you set thata table—an' leave my little plan all to me."

"Bessie," said I, "this is a straw; but what's good enough for one drowning person ought to be good enough for another. Let's set the table."

"That is fine," said Carmen, "that is fine." And she unlocked the storeroom door, and went in, shutting it after her. Presently we heard her striking a match.

.
Half an hour later the table was set, the cabin lamps shone brightly upon the white cloth, and there came Swigot and the doctor, the latter looking much the worse for wear, bearing smoking dishes from the galley. Carol came in next, and last of all Brandreth and Kelsey. The latter had wet and slicked down his spare hairs for the occasion and Brandreth had gone so far as to shave his beard.

Carrol seated himself at the head of the table, forcing Bessie to sit at his right hand. Lichee, his eyes heavy with sleep, came next to his mother; then Kelsey, Brandreth, my-

self, the doctor and Swigot. The place at Carrol's left was for Carmen, but she did not at once take it.

"I am waiter," she said, "I pass them dishes, and pass that wine."

One by one we served ourselves from a tureen of bean soup that Carmen, laughing noisily, handed the rounds of the table. Then, stepping to a kind of sideboard that had been rigged, she took from it a bottle of wine, wrapped in a napkin and went once more the round of the table filling the men's glasses.

"Good girl," said Carrol, "good girl. And now my happy family — here's luck!"

He tossed off his glass of wine at one gulp and held it out to Carmen to be refilled. Warmed by the generous liquor, he laughed aloud, and catching Carmen playfully round the waist drew her on to his knee; she giggled, resisted, but went to him willingly enough, as it seemed.

"That wine smells funny to me," said the little doctor.

"Were you speaking to me," I said coldly. "I did n't taste it."

"Nor I," said he, "it's gone bad."

Swigot rose suddenly from his place.

"I feel kind 'er giddy," he said. "It's the

smell of the lamps." He went out into the fresh air.

"Funny," said Kelsey, "*I* feel sort of giddy — I've got a gripe in me stummick."

From her perch on Carrol's knee Carmen smiled toward the speaker.

"Maybe," she said, "you take one two drop *Spirit of Lavender*, you feel better. You not remember? You have little bottle label *Spirit of Lavender*?"

Kelsey rose to his feet with a sharp cry of terror and anguish.

"What's the matter," cried Carrol sharply.

"The matter!" cried Kelsey. "My God — my God — the slut has poisoned us, and we are all dead men."

"Is that true?" cried Carrol in an awful voice. He rose, unsteadily, casting Carmen violently from him.

"True," she said, "it is as true as Roy Cunningham look down from heaven know — you have drunk, an' you an' you, an' now your dam' soul go howling into hell."

Carrol caught up the empty bottle of wine by the neck and, swinging it over his shoulder, hurled it with frightful velocity into the woman's face. She dropped with a sound of shattered glass and —

"Go first," he shouted, and the next second I had felled him with the chair upon which I had been sitting, and snatching a blunt knife from the table forced it somehow through his right eye into his brain.

Then I rose, still howling like a wild beast with fury and horror; but there was no need of any further effort. Kelsey and Brandreth were in convulsions on the floor; Swigot had not come back, and was undoubtedly suffering his last throes, like a poisoned rat, in some corner of the ship. The doctor alone, who had not touched the wine, sat stiffly in his place. He was blue with fear. Bessie, holding Lichee by the hand, had backed against the wall. Carmen had not moved.

Gradually the horrid sounds that came from my throat ceased; and I ran to Bessie, sobbing aloud, as a child runs to its nurse.

"Buck up, Jim!" she said, "buck up! We're not out of the woods yet. Never mind — there. You look out for Lichee, and I'll clean the slate."

She darted around the table and caught the little doctor by the shoulders, and dragged him from his chair.

"Now my little bomb," she cried, "you've burst once on this ship and done quite some

damage, but you 'll never burst again. Overboard you go!" and she began to force him toward the cabin door. They disappeared, struggling violently, the strong deep-chested woman, and the weak spindle-shanked man. One wild cry rang in my ears.

A moment later Bessie, breathing hard, stood once more beside me.

"Jim," she said, "it's all over now, and unless you and Lichee and I play each other false—why all's well. The money's ours now—and there ought to be bright days coming to us all. Lichee, you monkey, you be fine, rich Melican man some day. And Jim—Jim—"

Here Bessie broke down and sobbed, and I, catching her in my arms, had at that moment no memory of any other woman.

THE END



UC SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY



A 000 816 435 2

